

Solo Sessions, Vol. 1

By

Brenda Earle Stokes

Written by

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Following her 2014 hit album *Right about Now*, **Brenda Earle Stokes** is back with another charming release entitled **Solo Sessions Vol. 1**, the combination of piano and voice has never sounded so good. **Earle Stokes** takes us eagerly on a lush and fluent journey of Jazz, and with each brush stroke of genius, manifests something utterly listenable and entertaining.

That voyage begins with the opening gambit called **If You Never Come to Me**, an ultra-confident performance on piano is equalled by her vocals, which seem to just drift across the room with the pristine textured wings of an angel.

We can watch as the artist follows that up with a piece called **Standing**, lyrically sublime and completely her own work, this is a truly outstanding offering indeed, one that also offers up a sense of empowerment to the listener as well; the complex performance on piano was really something to enjoy.

One of the songs that caught my attention early on was this next one called **Weaver of Dreams**, this was one clever composition, enchanting and spell-binding, but also a piece that could find its feet quite nicely in the swing genre. Once more sublimely performed and with such a deft hand on the keys too.

Jazz has become a big part of my life over the last few years and I am going to enjoy listening to this album on my sun kissed balcony, especially this next offering entitled **The Consequences of Falling**. A far more modern feel can be found within this piece, one that was almost anthem like in its construction as well, and contained a wonderful well of soul in its overall arrangement.

How Long Has That Evening Train Been Gone? This statement of a piece is that moment when we take one tentative step into the second half of the album. This was one incredible song that had me reaching for my *Harmonica*; a real blues feel can be found here. Originally recorded by one *Leroy Carr* and would you believe in 1928, this is one heck of a great blues classic and one recorded many, many times by other artists, but here **Earle Stokes** pulls off a stunning performance, one that will have you pressing repeat on this track many times; I'm currently on my third play at this moment of time.

Ladies in Mercedes, I once saw this performed by a super group of musicians live back in the late 80's with one *Steve Swallow*, the author of this piece, that was good, but this is a fantastic version, and even though I am a singer, I wouldn't know where to start with this incredibly complex piece. **Earle Stokes** has such an impeccable sense of timing, this is one of those songs you will want to listen to a few times to really get the grasp of just how brilliant her vocals and piano performance actually is; an absolutely classy presentation indeed.

This next track is one of the most heartfelt songs of the early 80's by *Michael McDonald* and called **I Can Let Go Now**. This is one of the most charming and beautiful performances from **Earle Stokes** from the album, and contains some lyrics that still hit me to this day right between the eyes. "*But I was tossed high by love, I almost never came down.*" The enactment by the artist of this fantastic song is completely sublime and magnificent, one to make you really feel the emotive content of the ballad.

For any Jazz fan there is nothing like taking some time out with little *Dave Brubeck* and this version of **Strange Meadowlark** will do just nicely, the partnership with **Earle Stokes** and her piano is totally symbiotic, and her vocal range that flies around this musical meadow is simply idyllic. To think this composition started life in 1959, it has not only stood the test of time, but the artist has literally breathed fresh life into it.

Many now will be remembering the year 1985 with this next song, that year was packed with glorious music, and this one, **The Power of Love**, was released by *Huey Lewis and the News* back in that day. Once more **Earle Stokes** doesn't just perform a pop standard, she brings another moment of extreme soul to

the offering, and her vocals on this track are as good as any you're likely to hear in any genre.

Our penultimate piece is called **The Waltz**. This is a wonderfully intricate offering and while the original music came from *Christian Tamburr*, (*The album Move 2006*) the lyrics have been penned by the artist herself, in what is a true stand out composition off the album. Her vocals on this song are amazingly complex and remind me of Australian Jazz singer *Elizabeth Geyer* at times, in a performance that is simply breath taking.

I cannot believe we have arrived at the last track off the album and we finish with something to light up your night, its **East of the Sun (West of the Moon)**. Back in 1940 Sinatra sang this with back up slang vocals and many female artists, including one of my favourites, *Sarah Vaughn* have sung this. On this recording **Brenda Earle Stokes** pulls of something quite remarkable, piano and vocals have literally never sounded so in tune with each other and so amazingly great, this is a song I could listen to on repeat for hours and never get bored.

Brenda Earle Stokes and **Solo Sessions, Vol. 1** is a must have album for all Jazz fans, it's respectful in its renditions, creative in its content and stylish at all times. **Solo Sessions, Vol. 1** is that moment all of us Jazz fans wish we could have, it is our own personal performer, delivering unique and exciting Jazz music to thrill our ears, some new, some standards, but all thoroughly professional played and sung. I would advise getting this one in your musical collections as quick as you can, it is absolutely stunning.