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PERSONNEL: Dorothy Leigh, vocals; Alva Nelson, piano, keyboards, flute, percussion; Doug Harris, tenor saxophone, flute; Jimmy Cozier, alto saxophone, flute, clarinet; Kenny Shanker, alto Saxophone; Patrice Higgins, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet; Dave Watson, baritone saxophone, alto flute; Freddie Hendrix, trumpet; Cecil Bridgewater, trumpet, flugelhorn; Hardin Butcher, trumpet, flugelhorn; Walter Ricks, trumpet, flugelhorn; Earl McIntyre, bass trombone; Danny Hall, Isrea Butler, Barry Cooper, trombone; Tony Lewis, Arti Dixon, drums; Stanley Banks, Thomas Gooding, bass; Dave Shum, Billy Patterson, guitar; Donald Eaton, percussion.

By Bob Gish

Here's a big production CD with full orchestration, taking the listener into a celebratory world of disco and rhythm and blues. Dorothy Leigh holds forth with exuberance and hope, calling forth a "second chance" as the lyrics of the title track express, misleading only in that this is a debut recording

"She's free too be who she wants to be," say the lyrics and that spirit carries through all ten songs. The backup singers ring out in full-throated joy as well. And the listener can't help becoming part of the contagion, moving in song, walking in rhythm.

Such participatory celebration is enhanced by the extensive jacket presentation of all the lyrics so that there's no deterrence to joining in the choir. There's a certain repetition in message and melody but to no great detriment. The more one insists on a happy state of mind, a bounce to the step, and the more one accents the positives and eliminates the negatives, then the more one is shored up to meet life's and this CD's trials and tests.

Ultimately there's no need to over analyze the lyrics and the songs or even Ms. Leigh's vocals. Oftentimes, and this seems to be an instance, there's no need to establish exalted, idealized expectations. If one just takes these songs as they are, the more appealing they become. All in all, Ms. Leigh is more than suited to supply the vocals these tunes require.

One might protest that things are a bit over done, over produced and wish for a more stripped down production, a smaller, more understated package, more in keeping with the material. Such a hope, however, is fleeing in the acceptance of things as they are, leaving the listener with a salute and a congratulatory tipping of the hat.



B.D. LENZ

FIVE & LIVE – BDLLENZmusic. www.bdlenz.com. *Un Hub; Smooth Sailing; Juxtaposition; Another Brick in the Wall; People Get Ready; Fi'Fo; Bridges; Friday Night at the Cadillac Club; Brother, You Will Know; Superstition.*

PERSONNEL: B.D. Lenz, guitar; Geof Mattoon, sax/wind controller; Dan Paul, piano/keys; Tom Cottone, drums; Josh Orlando, drums.

By Bob Gish

You got to love B.D. Lenz! His is a big sound, a big talent. He should be on George Benson's Broadway because he can sure play that damn guitar. He's not on Broadway here, however, but he's live in ten representative songs done in various venues, exemplary tunes of much worth, each on its own, but powerfully impressive taken all in all.

Just listen to Stevie Wonder's "Superstition," done here to full effect and effects in a wailing, super, super guitar performance, one of those that literally bring the house down. Even Stevie Wonder, not to mention Stevie Ray Vaughn would hold this guy and his ultra-hot band in awe (most especially featured bassist James Rosocha and Geoff Mattoon). You can gauge by the applause, as if it's needed to be entered in evidence, just how much the audience grooves on these sounds.

A healthy proportion of the tracks are songs composed by Lenz, "Uh Huh," "Smooth Sailing," "Juxtaposition," "Fi'Fo," "Bridges," and "Brother, You will Know," all of the titles indicative of the spirit they contain. Listeners might feel compelled to compose their own lyrics to these tunes; however, words aren't needed, sentences not required. The music, the notes, the arrangements, the dynamics speak for themselves.

Bottom line: Lenz is a real embodiment of a guitar hero and countless aspiring guitarists across the land would give up a lot (except maybe really practicing) to play like Mr. Lenz. But just like jaguars are born to run, Lenz is born to play. And play he does leaving the listener breathless in their musical journey with him.



AMY LONDON

Let's Fly – Motema MTM-56. *Out of This World; Let's Fly; This Happy Madness; Duke Ellington's Sound of Love; How Deep Is the Ocean?; I Love Being Here With You; All I Want; My Darling Monique; I Never Meant to Hurt You; You Taught My Heart to Sing; You and the Night and the Music/Habanera; Here's to Life; Without a Song.*

Personnel: Amy London, vocals and piano (track 9); Roni Ben-Hur, guitar; Santi Debriano, bass; Steve Williams, drums; Steve Kroon, percussion; Tardo Hammer, piano (tracks 2, 11, 13); Glauco Sagebin, piano (tracks 1,3,5,12); Richard Wyands, piano (tracks 4,6,8,10).

By Eric Harabadian

Amy London is a singer's singer that is a master of lyrical interpretation and one that paints vibrant colors and images with words. She is steeped in the Great American Songbook as well as contemporary

pop and the classics and brings that understanding to the fore in all she does.

How apropos that London begins the album with Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer's "Out of This World." This song sets the pace for a listening experience that truly transports the listener to an alternate world. She brings a haunting, effervescent quality to this opening track. The title tune "Let's Fly" follows and is special for a few reasons. One, it is good natured and really swings but it was also written by one of London's musical mentors Annie Ross. It is a playful and enticing track with additional vocalese-infused lyrics that London penned herself. "This Happy Madness" changes the mood with a rich and romantic samba. The band is empathic in their support of London's vivid lyrical adventures. The tender side of this singer and the band can be found on Charles Mingus' "Duke Ellington's Sound of Love." This piece is a showcase for Richard Wyand's superb piano work and a notable solo from bassist Santi Debriano. "How Deep is the Ocean?" has been covered countless times by many performers but here it gets a mid-tempo Latin feel. The band digs deep and provides a strong rhythmic bed for London's plaintive torch-fueled vocalizing. The mood turns bright and cheerful on Peggy Lee's "I Love Being Here With You." This is fun and cool mixed with a bit of sassiness.

Part of what makes this album unique and truly work is London's song choices. Joni Mitchell's "All I Want" is a prime example of a song that crosses over to the jazz idiom very well, yet is not taken from the classic book of standards. This is an exceptionally creative and expressive piece that breaks the chemistry of a human relationship down to the core. London delivers it in a frank and almost stream of conscious manner. That earnest and honest approach continues on Elmo Hope's "My Darling Monique." Here the leader flexes her operatic chops, with a tune that is somewhat dark and moody. Laura Nyro's "I Never Meant to Hurt You" is, perhaps, part of a mid-album trilogy of deeply personal and honest portrayals of all aspects of love. Further down the list of tunes the mash up, if you will, of "You and the Night and the Music/Habanera" is London and company at their most brilliant. This one is romantic and sensual, with an ambience that is unparalleled. Amy's delivery is dreamy and somewhat surreal, with a journey half-way through into French lyrics backed by guitarist Ben-Hur's beautiful accompaniment.

Overall, London is a consummate musician and entertainer that captivates with a performance that invites you in, wraps its arms around you and makes you feel the love. This is a disc I will be listening to again and again for some time to come. Let's fly, indeed!



MOOK LOXLEY

CARESS – www.myspace.com/mookloxleymusic/music. *Mojo Workin'; Jonsin'; Freedom; I Got a*
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