



Language
Lorraine Feather
Jazzed Media
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★★★★



Over her mere seven-album discography, Lorraine Feather has carved out a fulfilling career as a jazz singer far outdistancing many one-shots, far less talented but successful pop-jazz vocalists, and wannabes. Her talent as a lyricist of wit, sarcasm, and keen observations of the American human condition is her true strength, and not always as acknowledged as her verbal chops and inventiveness. Her language goes beyond the nomenclatures of swing, bop, and contemporary improvisation, as Feather exploits many literary references and well-worn phraseology from various acumens, and keeps the proceedings upbeat and interactive between her words and the musical notes offered by her excellent confreres.

Pianist Shelly Berg is closest to Feather as a collaborator, writing the music for Feather's cleverest lyrics. The quick, lithe, bouncy, and brisk "Traffic and Weather" relates to Bay Area commuter congestion, climatological issues, or references to inseparable pairings, and "We Appreciate Your Patience," with a cynical, animated take on annoying automated answering services, teams Feather and Berg in multilevel harmonic and whimsical refrains. Feather is fond of stringing worn-out clichés together, as on "Patience," but is in an especially sharp mood about trite multiple sports adages on the bopper "Hit the Ground Runnin'," featuring a furious Russell Ferrante on piano, and tells the all too familiar thoughts-racing, mouse-on-a-treadmill tale of "Where Are My Keys?," turning a dilemma into fun.

Also skillful, aside from their lyric content, are her instrumental ideas, like using a horn section and a drummer only on the sassy tale of a career dilemma "Waiting Tables," or the slinky, bluesy Duke Ellington-like "A Household Name," debunking stardom and alerting you to the pitfalls of the celebrity trap. Feather can also be sentimental, as on her romanticized Billy Strayhorn waltz tribute "In Flower," the melancholy "I Love New York at Christmas," and her most languid, evocative tune, "Making It Up as We Go Along." She is rarely self-conscious or insular, but Ferrante's modal two-chord piano prop-up during "Home Alone" keeps Feather's possible dour mood in check, although she can't help being dotting on "Very Unbecoming." On occasion, vocalists Tierney Sutton, Janis Siegel, and Cheryl Bentley enter in supportive vocal cameos.

This may very well be Lorraine Feather's best effort, certainly the one where collaboration is the key, and statements on our disposable, technology-driven, time-consuming society had to be made. Bravo Lorraine, and hang in there!