

Cosmik Muse Rekords

3 Monroe Parkway Suite P333
Lake Oswego, Or 97035
503.246.4646

Recent Press For Belinda Underwood

Don Heckman, L.A. Times, June 2005

Underwood, who is a bassist and singer, has a fragile, youthful-sounding voice. But the emotional thrust of her vocals and the lyrical imagery of her original songs are the product of a seasoned creative mind. Portland, Oregon-based, she is accompanied by some of that city's fine players, including bassist David Friesen and guitarist Dan Balmer. Her laid-back versions of standards such as "How Deep Is the Ocean," "You Don't Know What Love Is" and "There Will Never Be Another You" are intriguing examples of what a new generation of musical artists can bring to this classic material.

####

Karl Stober, Jazz Review Magazine (jazzreview.com)
June 2005

Synchronize sultry overtones with an innate sense of jazz, accompanied with a multi level talent, and you have a moment well spent with Belinda Underwood. "Uncurling" is a collection of the many dimensions intertwined within this educated siren. Seductive? Yes! and it works so well with her becoming, infectious nature to whomever is exposed.

Original in lyric and concept, Underwood's "Uncurling" releases a soulful energetic plethora of crisp compositions. She allows the "push and players" a moment of real jazz laid down the way it ought to be, with intimate style! No comparison from this scribe, Ms. Underwood is Ms. Underwood alone, unique in all aspects of her stage presence.

The timid lover scenario is evident in her original Later Baby, on a love left. The string and key bonding in this piece allows the lyric line to

really come across.

Title cut Uncurling is delicate in presentation. Ms. Underwood's vocals again seem so timid, but with an angelic romance to them that expels hidden confidence. Clay Giberson does a fine job on the ivories, keeping the flow intact along with percussionist Martin Zarzar.

No sugar coating needed, Ms Underwood's firm understanding of the genre is evident in "Uncurling." Take the time; it will be well worth the spin!

####

**Carmel DeSota, Lilith's Child Webzine (Focused on
Women in Music) May 2005**

Bass savvy, coupled with modern jazz song writing. Belinda Underwood's debut CD, Underwood Uncurling, is a journey in today's jazz harmony with yesterday's rustic charms. Underwood invokes eclectically thought provoking lyrics in her storytelling approach to composition. Her soft falsetto and strong chest voice is reminiscent of the late Billie Holiday. Underwood, a native of California, grew up in a musical family. Her mother trained classically on piano at the University of Oregon. Her father, a horn player and inventor of the Underwood bass pick-up, exposed her to music on a daily basis. Underwood began music lessons on violin and piano as a youngster. As a young adult, she studied at the University of California at Berkeley. An early childhood family friend, David Friesen, came to teach a master class. This was a turning point in Underwood's future. She was so impressed with the amount of knowledge she gained from one master class, that she asked Friesen if she could study with him, but his answer was no.

Underwood, convinced this was her direction, continued to be insistent with Friesen. He agreed upon one condition, she would move to Portland to study with him. It was in this time she began to hone her skills as a bassist, vocalist and songwriter.

Underwood Uncurling is a culmination of her journey and experiences combined with classic standards that present a pleasing and compelling release. The release begins with Born to be Blue, a wonderful jazz standard written by Mel Torme and Robert Wells. Underwood approaches this cut with a matter of fact phrasing that compliments the storyline of

the lyrics. Another highlight on this track is bassist, Phil Baker. His intonation and execution is superb.

While listening to the cut Trees, penned by Underwood, you become enveloped by an airy palate of emotions. Underwood's ability to convey raw emotions and convincing delivery within her phrasing is present throughout the release. An even stronger ability Underwood exhibits is her songwriting style. Her contemplative lyrics compliment her sophistication of harmonic complexities within the music.

Underwood's connection to David Friesen brought another special guest to the album, the famous Brazilian percussionist, Airtó Moreira. At times Underwood's unhurried delivery and willowy vocal tone is an incarnation of Moreira's wife, Flora Purim, most notably known for her work with Chick Corea and Return to Forever. There is even a cover of Corea's, You're Everything which is complimented by Underwood's originals Later Baby and Unspoken Thoughts creating a inter-woven theme between these three compositions.

The CD ends with a stripped-down setting of bass and voice featuring Underwood and Friesen in a duet. It leaves you with a calming effect that exhibits jazz in its most beautiful state, raw and uninhibited, a perfect ending to a fabulous debut by a blossoming songstress. I look forward to more from Belinda Underwood as a vocalist and most certainly as a songwriter.

####

(Belinda's note: For the record, David Friesen did not require that I move to Portland, he only required that I come to Portland for a summer to study. Someone misquoted me on this a while ago and the misquote keeps getting referenced.)

####

T.D., Willamette Week Newspaper, April 12, 2005

Born into a musically rich family, Underwood moves seamlessly between a more folk-oriented, singer-songwriter mode and vintage pop vocals. A fine acoustic bassist (and baritone uke player!), Underwood really comes into her own in the role of self-consciously sultry singer (think '50s-era Helen Merrill).

####

Bill Donaldson, Jazz Improv Magazine, Spring 2005 Issue

□ Portland Oregon singer/bassist Belinda Underwood's first CD as a leader is one that sounds as if it were the result of a mature talent—one who shuns the too-often-heard tendency to include as many varying styles as possible, however tangential they may be to the musician's central interests, in order to include references to a lifetime of influences. Instead, Underwood arrives fully formed with a central theme governing the content of *Underwood Uncurling* and a subtle consistency of feeling that hints at the roiling undercurrents of conflicted emotions. In addition, she is a writer of haunting lyrics, some painfully romantic and others environmentally observational, that attract the listener's attention, so non-traditional and poetically written are they. The other half of the tracks on the CD include standards that reinforce Underwood's feelings of disappointment, world weariness or undeterred pursuit.

With exacting articulation and dynamic understatement allowing the words to speak for themselves, Underwood, initially a bass player, implies a pulse, though unsung, as she holds out notes. On a few of the tracks like "How Deep Is the Ocean" or "You Don't Know What Love Is," Underwood takes up the bass for self-accompaniment, returning to her origins where she sang some of the lines that she imagined while playing bass. Even on those standards, though, Underwood sings with the coolness of a Chris Connor, never raising her voice but instead painting a scene or making a statement. On "Born to Be Blue," it's easy to believe that Underwood knows what it's like to be blue, the knowledge of such melancholy seeping through in her voice. And on "You Don't Know What Love Is," Underwood sinks so deeply into the meaning of the song that it seems that she's conveying lessons that she learned through her own experience, whether or not she is. "Invitation" comes across with similar combinations of sultriness and caution instilled by hurt. And Underwood's bounding bass playing on "How Deep Is the Ocean," which leads into a bass walk in mid-song, makes clear the source of the pulse felt in her singing.

Underwood's own compositions, though, include infatuation and head-long involvement despite the knowledge gained from being burned in the past: "Earth school can be cruel,/Love is in short supply/I feel insane from the joy/Of simply having met a boy/So willing to learn." And her *Later, Baby* puts forth this sentiment: "Don't think I don't want you/If I ask you to go away.../Someday I'll be grown-up, responsible,/And you'll like me better

anyway.” But like Patricia Barber or other singer/songwriters with minds of their own, Belinda Underwood’s effectiveness derives equally from her musical sense that sustains a rhythm in the words she sings or even in the rests between notes, largely because of her groups’ like-mindedness from playing in other groups with Underwood.

☐☐☐ Fortunately, the person responsible for Underwood’s move to Portland, Dave Friesen, appears on the CD’s most memorable song, “World Peace Blues,” whose lyrics consist of just two words—yes, “world” and “peace.” Underwood scat-sings throughout the remainder of the track, which includes one of Friesen’s distinctively melodic solos and an urgent solo by tenor saxophonist John Gross. All in all, Underwood Uncurling introduces a jazz singer with her own perspectives coloring the her first CD’s songs, and she does it with casual confidence.

####

Dick Crockett
STILL ANOTHER JAZZ SHOW
MONDAYS 10 an & 10 pm, Pacific "The Voice" 88.7fm
March 2005

BELINDA UNDERWOOD is next if you please, because this young lady doesn’t need the directions to Knott’s Landing. Underwood is hip, young and cool.☐ The East Coast may have Nellie McKay. We, of the Left Coast now have Belinda Underwood. She has the same honest “Kevin Spacey” quality of a Blossom Dearie and Nellie McKay.☐ For we are admittedly an old softie for a good homespun hip lyric. Belinda Underwood has that ability with her new UNCURLING. Her song “Trees” is positively ecological, as pianist Clay Giberson creates a seductive atmosphere,☐ a majestic song. We also played “Later Baby” and Underwood’s lyric is ironic, understated and charming as McKay. “World Peace” features scat vocalization by Underwood, Dave Freisen, bass and Airto Moreira on☐ drums with tenor saxophone player John☐ Gross. “Say My Name” is a sensuous love song with Underwood playing baritone ukulele with percussion. She has the unique sadness and sensuality of many Portuguese singers.☐ No wonder Orson Welles did not want to leave Rio in the forties.☐ Underwood’s from Oregon, I think... She’s lovely like an Ava Gardner, a good singer, song writer.☐ Watch this one!!!!☐☐

####

J. Scott Fugate
General Manager, Program & Music Director
Eclectic 89.1 WBCX March 2005

Belinda Underwood sings and swings with vulnerability, passion and versatility. We'll be giving this a lot of air play on Eclectic 89.1 WBCX covering NE Atlanta and North Georgia!

####

D.J. Fazio at thejazznation.com March 2005

If you like it straight-ahead, then you'll enjoy Underwood Uncurling. Jazz singer Belinda Underwood has an innate lyrical sense with intonation that is second to none. Released on the Cosmik Muse label, this is an artistic record that goes above and beyond. Check out Underwood Uncurling. She's unbelievable!

Half of the songs performed on this project showcase original compositions by Underwood and not only do her songwriting skills show maturity, they reveal a social conscience as well. The title track, Uncurling, is a very pleasing number featuring this songstress' pure vocals, as well as a gorgeous piano solo by Clay Giberson and rounding out the ensemble with the perfect balance of drum/bass lines are Martin Zarzar and Phil Baker respectively. While the ballad Trees features the same musicians, it holds a more mysterious feeling. Then showing an even more reflective side is one of my favorite songs, World Peace Blues. Underwood's impressive scatting is complemented beautifully by the collective improvisation of tenor saxophonist John Gross, bassist David Friesen and Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira. An added surprise to the disc is Underwood's acoustic bass and baritone ukulele performances and she includes them on the melancholic, Say My Name.

Her interpretation of the Mel Torme song, Born to Be Blue is so natural it seems like she was born to sing it and Irving Berlin's, How Deep Is The Ocean is guaranteed to have your fingers poppin' and your toes tappin'. This upbeat number features some outstanding piano (Chad Wagner) and acoustic bass work (Underwood). While the Chick Corea track, You're Everything, is a fine example of musicians communicating in song and letting each other shine. Then closing out the set with just vocals and acoustic bass is the endearing, There Will Never Be Another You.

There's an underlying vibe of peace and understanding that permeates Underwood Uncurling. A refreshing and artistic offering, she sings of human experiences and desires, of love lost and love found. And I loved every minute of it!

####

**"Sound check" By MARTY HUGHLEY, The Oregonian
February 04, 2005**

WHERE BASS INSTINCTS MEET MELODIC JOY -- The image is of something natural and lovely, a sign of growth and a symbol of optimism. In Belinda Underwood's song "Uncurling," "the simple joy of a delicate fern uncurling" serves as a metaphor for the emotional openness that new love can bring. But the phrase might also be used as a description of "Underwood Uncurling," the Portland singer/bassist's beguiling debut album.

A collection split evenly between well-chosen jazz standards and Underwood's own compositions, "Underwood Uncurling" is softly lyrical and intimate, sophisticated yet unassuming, contemplative but never ponderous. It's a very promising introduction to a young talent. And for Underwood herself, she sees it as a representation of her growth as a musician, songwriter and person.

The 28-year-old California native has been uncurling in several directions of late. In addition to jazz gigs, she performs in Beliss (an eclectic, ukulele-based folk duo with her younger sister Melissa), the Latin-jazz band Pachamanca and a Middle Eastern group called Wazn al Sharq. She grew up in a musical household, her mother a jazz pianist (classically trained at University of Oregon, alongside the likes of bassist Glen Moore), her father a horn player and inventor of a popular pickup microphone for the acoustic bass. That background gave her the advantage of violin and piano lessons as a youngster, and a close-up look at jam sessions when her parents' friends dropped by. Family connections have continued to be a plus. For one thing, she can supplement her nightclub gigs with work for her father's company, Underwood Pickups. For another, she wound up with the internationally renowned Portland bassist David Friesen as a teacher and mentor.

Underwood had taken up the bass during high school, then while attending the University of California at Berkeley (initially to study

astrophysics) began to take music more seriously. Friesen, an old friend of her parents, came to teach a master class.

"I remember one of my teachers calling me into her office and saying, 'You have to take this class,' " Underwood, a willowy beauty, recalled recently, sitting with drummer Martin Zarzar over steaming bowls of pho at a downtown Portland restaurant. "I showed up for the class -- late. And afterward he said that when I'd walked in he recognized me from having met me when I was a baby."

That brief class was a turning point. Feeling she'd learned so much in that single session, she asked Friesen to give her lessons. He said no. But she kept asking and months later, convinced of her seriousness, he relented on the condition that she move to Portland.

Arriving about two years ago, she found inspiration not only in Friesen, who she credits with pressing her to become a songwriter, but also in a jazz community she says is much more inviting than that in the Bay Area. "Underwood Uncurling" takes advantage of that community in the talents of Zarzar (of Pink Martini and Pachamanca), guitarist Dan Balmer, saxophonist John Gross, and pianist Clay Giberson. And though Underwood handles the big upright herself on a few tracks, she leaves the heavy lifting for Friesen and another Portland stalwart, Phil Baker.

Friesen's involvement also helped secure another guest star, the famed Brazilian percussionist Airto Moreira. And at times Underwood's pillowy vocal tone and unhurried melodies recall the original incarnation of Chick Corea's Return to Forever, which included Moreira and his wife, singer Flora Purim. There's even a cover of Corea's "You're Everything" from that period.

This is a jazz singer, though, who counts Bobby Gentry and Bjork among her favorites, along with No. 1 influence Nancy King. As she continues to fashion those disparate tastes into a style of her own, chances are she'll uncurl more and more into, simply, a joy.

####

**Tom Surowicz - KBEM "Monday Nights with Tom Surowicz"
Star Tribune, Minneapolis, MN, Feb 4, 2005**

Belinda Underwood is a promising jazz singer from Portland, OR, in the classic 1950s-60s mold of Helen Merrill and Chris Connor, but with some key differences. First off, Underwood, who's making her Midwest debut, also plays acoustic bass and composes songs with a pronounced hippie streak. Her treatment of hallowed standards is even finer, making her

debut CD, "Underwood Uncurling, a sultry treat for open-minded Great American Songbook fans.

####

George Fuller, KRML Jazz and Blues Radio, Jan 2005

"Belinda Underwood is multitalented & jazz knowledgeable. A win-win plus for the future of America's art, Jazz. Belinda is on her way."

####

**Kyle O'Brien, Jazz Society of Oregon's *Jazzscene* Magazine
Jan 2005**

"Underwood Uncurling...this auspicious debut album shows a truly mature artist on her way up the jazz ladder, and it shouldn't take long for Underwood to find her way to the top....On just the unique strength of her voice alone she is a talent, but the fact that she also plays a fine upright bass and baritone ukulele as well shows that she is more than just a pretty voice..."

####

**George W. Carroll, The Musicians' Ombudsman (ejazznews.com)
Dec 2004**

"She's sultry, assertive, compelling.....And, nice looking too! Oregon based Jazz singer Belinda Underwood comes to us multi-honed.....A double threat.....She can burn hard on her acoustic bass, while she delivers her rendition of The American Songbook. Belinda possesses a voice that renders song with a mastery of inflection.....All backed up by her bold, innovative, non-compromising, & tight jazz group. This is one hell of an argument for a junket to Portland, Oregon to imbibe the animated & pro-active artistic offerings a great jazz town proffers."

####

For more info about Belinda Underwood, visit

www.belindaunderwood.com