

Jazzwise MAGAZINE



Tammy Weis

Where I Need To Be

www.tammyweis.com | ★★★★★

Tammy Weis (v) plus various personnel including Tom Cawley (p), Al Cherry (g), Arnie Somogyi (b) and Seth De Krom (d). Rec. date not stated

Consisting of 10 originals and just a single cover (Lennon and McCartney's 'Help'), Tammy Weis's sophomore album juxtaposes personal tales based on her new life in London with memories of her past life in her native Canada. Weis's voice is a uniquely powerful amalgam of country, bluegrass and jazz influences. Hardly surprising, given that her mum was a country singer who named her daughter after Tammy Wynette, and at family gatherings there'd be a fight over the piano chair as her mum, grandmother and great-grandmother battled to accompany other relatives on banjo, fiddle and upright bass.

Featuring songs co-written for the most part with pianist Tom Cawley (a fabulously impressive accompanist here), it's impossible not to be carried away by the bittersweet sentiments of 'I Kept Going', the feisty 'Not That Kinda Girl' or the reflective 'Heading Home'. It's as far removed from your typical over-emoting jazz chanteuse as it's possible to be, with Weis finding emotion in the unhurried simplicity of her delivery, rather than any tonsil-shredding histrionics. Her secret weapon, a sparingly used vibrato with which she warms and intensifies phrase endings, is employed to spine-tingling effect.

BJ Cole's pedal steel guitar proves an indispensable textural addition on a trio of tracks, notably 'Don't Want To Fall In Love Again' co-written with Grammy Award winner Terry Britten, as does Julian Jackson's nicely understated harmonica work. It's also a treat to hear the singer's friend and mentor, Julian Joseph, in the piano chair for Weis's entirely self-penned 'All Because Of You'.

Jazzwise talks to Tammy Weis about her album

I'm guessing from the album title you're not regretting the relocation to London?

I've been very fortunate to meet the people I have. It isn't often you get to write with someone as talented as Terry Britten, and to work with Julian Joseph, BJ Cole, Tom Cawley. It's just a wonderful talent pool here.

Does the prospect of releasing an album of self-penned material excite or terrify you?

Both. As a musician all you can say to yourself is I did the best that I could and it came from my heart.

This is a very different record from your 2000 debut, Legacy. Do you think it's more representative of the real Tammy Weis?

Yes, absolutely. As an artist it takes a while to find yourself – your voice – and this album is definitely a reflection of who I am.

The album's sole cover is a fascinatingly different version of 'Help!' Why this particular song?

Just prior to recording the album my investor fell through. As you can imagine I was concerned as to how I was going to pay for the album and in frustration shouted 'I need help!' The next two mornings I woke up with the song 'Help!' in my head (I'd never really sung it before). I called Julian and BJ and awkwardly sang it to them over the phone in the way I had dreamt it. They both agreed I needed to do it on my album. The lyrics certainly fit my situation and I loved the song. It felt right. **Peter Quinn**