

## Synia Carroll: Here's To You...

**By C. Michael Bailey**

November 9, 2016

*Et in terra.* Honesty in music is expressed in its simplicity. The first right thing that vocalist Synia Carroll does on her debut recording, *Here's to You...* is employ a jazz piano trio, the subatomic format for jazz: piano, bass, and drums. The second thing that Carroll does is fix her art in the earth, something older artists fail to do until later in their career, to their considerable disadvantage as I hear it. Carroll does two things here also. She mixes the frankly carnal with the grown up in "Be My Husband." This is responsible, grown up music like that of Dr. Louise Van Aarsen and Sue\_Sheriff. Grownups making grownup music. The second is she presents her art unadorned with synthetic production, to very great effect. Wow...this is how it is supposed to sound.

In a baker's dozen of standards (and not-so-standards) Carroll thrusts her sword in the ground, announcing her presence. The singer demonstrates a cheeky sense of humor in a performance of "My Favorite Things" introduced as Miles Davis' 4/4 modal "Milestones" before transforming into the more familiar waltz-time. Carroll's delivery is muscular and vibrant...a nice take on a well-worn jazz warhorse. Pianist Billy Marcus punctuates his solo with staccato runs and bluesy glisses. This performance cooks. As hot as "Favorite Things" is, the singer and trio ably cool off for a tender "My Foolish Heart." Mongo Santamaria's "Afro Blue" is taken humidly over the top with some deft drumming from Stephen Buckholtz and Max Kelly's sensual percussion. Carroll is in full flight with a scat full of the Islands.

The cool diptych of Bob Dorough's "Devil May Care" and Burke and Webster's "Black Coffee" show that a single coin has two different sides while remaining the same body. The former is a brisk reading heavy on the downbeat, wide open for Carroll's exacting delivery. On the latter, Carroll adopts a more relaxed posture, full of burnt joe and honey. The singer proves her bilingual bona fides with a spirited "Tristeza" before closing with a potent "Here's to Life." Synia Carroll makes her debut as a fully formed creative entity. This disc is not a trial balloon testing the often-fickle jazz audience. It is a definitive statement of an artist who has arrived and done so definitively.

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