

Even Without You

Interview Jenny Evans

Jenny Evans, you've given your project "Even Without You" a subtitle : songs of love and loss, passion and regret. Why did you decide to do that?

Initially, I called the project "Naked" because the songs are very personal. I've had some traumatic experiences during the last couple of years and I think I wrote the songs as a sort of catharsis. I've always been a very pragmatic person and when I've gone through times of sorrow or illness I look back and realise that I've actually gained something from these experiences - become wiser, maybe. But after we had been in the studio I realised that I hadn't written a song about baring your soul or figuratively divesting one's self so I gave the CD the title of one of my favourite tracks on the CD "Even Without You".

Jenny Evans, you've been singing jazz for over forty years now and you have an enormous repertoire of jazz and pop standards. What was the reason you decided to release a CD with only your own originals?

I've been writing lyrics for musician friends' compositions, notably by the trumpeter Dusko Goykovich, for many years now. Then I started writing the music to poems by friends. And of course, that led me to writing the lyrics *and* the music. I've written about forty songs in all.

So, this is a singer-songwriter project?

The term singer-songwriter often has the connotation of it being a bit folksy. But when I was growing up there were a lot of performers doing this – like Joni Mitchell, Carole King, Leonhard Cohen and Bob Dylan to name just a few. I've never liked being put in a box, being categorized. Nearly all the musicians I work with also use their own material for concerts plus standards. I'm a singer so I'm doing the same thing as them.

Do you write the lyrics or the music first?

That's something all songwriters have always been asked - from Irving Berlin to Cole Porter. I think that jazz is about being inspired by what's happening around you musically. When I'm writing lyrics to other people's music I have to be inspired by what I hear. And once you've found the key phrase you come up with an idea and a title and then everything develops from there.

But you haven't answered my question.

Well, that's like asking, what comes first? The chicken or the egg? You could ask, what inspires an artist? For me, it's initially an idea, often a phrase. When I'm writing the lyrics there's also the start of a melody in my head.