

lauren kinhan

The first thing you notice is her voice, and then her savvy choices. Lauren Kinhan possesses a rare and beautiful instrument, tough and tender, clear and fine-grained in every register, from dipping down in her husky chest tones or ascending into silvery head tones. With her glorious sound, she could sing anything and make it a memorable listening experience.

Whether on her own highly-acclaimed albums, as a 25-year member of the beloved vocal group **New York Voices**, or as co-founder of two diverse and inventive supergroups, **Moss** and **JaLaLa**, singer/songwriter Lauren has always forged her own path as a performer, composer and improviser. With her latest, ***A Sleepin' Bee*** (due out October 6, 2017 on her own **Dotted i Records**), Kinhan once again steers herself in unexpected directions with a new release that is at once the first all-standard collection of her career, a loving tribute to legendary vocalist **Nancy Wilson**, and unmistakably a Lauren Kinhan album - with all the unique perspective and idiosyncratic personality that has come to imply.

If the sudden appearance of an album's worth of standards in a catalogue dominated by original songs comes as a surprise, the process of it's creation is just as atypical. While Kinhan spent much of 2016 conceiving, rehearsing and workshopping the project, the circumstances of the recording arose suddenly through the auspices of her alma mater, **Berklee College of Music**. The session suddenly became an educational opportunity as well as a record date, providing a small group of Berklee students the invaluable privilege of observing and engaging in a recording session at the highest level.

First and foremost, though, ***A Sleepin' Bee*** is a celebration of Nancy Wilson on the occasion of the genre-hopping singer's 80th birthday. While Kinhan shares Wilson's penchant for blurring stylistic boundaries, her choice of material focuses on Wilson's early jazz albums, particularly her collaborations with **Cannonball Adderley** and **George Shearing**. Those recordings proved to be a jumping-off point for Kinhan, who utterly transforms these classic and obscure numbers with the help of pianist/creative partner **Andy Ezrin** and veteran producer **Elliot Schiener** as well as a stellar band featuring bassist **Matt Penman**, drummer **Jared Schonig** and special guest trumpeter **Ingrid Jensen**.

With three brilliant albums of her own songs under her belt, not to mention her game-changing work with three distinctive vocal groups and wide-ranging collaborations with singular artists from **Ornette Coleman** to **Bobby McFerrin**, Kinhan always delivers a 360 degree view of her creative world. ***Circle in a Square***, Kinhan's 2014 release puts on high display her vivid identity as a songwriter with a gift for capturing the emotional currents of everyday life. Rooted in jazz's improvisational imperative, she knows that you best celebrate the music by remaking it in your own image. She summons the intensity of a gospel singer of the deceptively languorous "Another Hill to Climb," which initially sounds like an uplifting anthems but instead unfolds as a cautionary tale.

Whether rapturously becalmed (“The Deep Within”), on the good-time prow (“Pocketful of Harlem”), or tormented by the search for unknowable answers (“To Live or Die”), Kinhan turns each piece into a self-contained emotional narrative driven by her unerring musical taste. **Jazz Journal** called it a “*Tour de Force*” and **Jazz Times’** Christopher Loudon says “*Kinhan has never shone brighter.*”

She made a powerful first impression as a **Phil Ramone** find with 2000’s ***Hardly Blinking***, an eclectic program of original songs exploring an array of topics and instrumental textures. A decade later, she followed up with the highly personal ***Avalon***, an album deeply informed by her experience of motherhood, and the pleasures and challenges of family life. In many ways ***Circle in a Square*** picks up where ***Avalon*** left off, evoking the numinous possibilities in a flirty pair of shoes, a familiar melody or an insinuating groove.

Her decided journey with **New York Voices** has run at the forefront of her career, since 1992, recording a full color catalogue, logging millions of miles, and creating an educational division that is in high demand all across the globe. On the verge of their 30th Anniversary with the ringing in of 2018, there are three recordings on deck, pairings with **Ivan Lins** and the **Danish Radio Big Band** and one with the **Bob Mintzer Big Band**. And in October of 2017, they return to the studio with **Elliot Schiener** for another eclectic NYV potpourri of songs and arrangements in their inimitable fashion.

With the new release of ***A Sleepin’ Bee***, it wouldn’t be Babette’s Feast without one more project gunning for some sunshine. **Moss** is growing again with a residency at Western Michigan University where old and new repertoire will be on display. Perhaps a new work is on the horizon with **Kate McGarry**, **Theo Bleckmann**, **Peter Eldridge** and new addition, **Jo Lawry**. **Luciana Souza** graced the first recording in 2008.

And with all her free time, there are other guest artist appearances, co-writing alliances and teaching engagements. Keeping this in-the-moment artist on her toes, on the road and in it for the long haul.

To learn more about Lauren, New York Voices, Moss, JaLaLa and her guest artist works, visit www.laurenkinhan.com