



From the moment **Jane Blackstone** stepped onto the streets of Union Square in New York City at age 18, her determination to live her life's passion as a jazz vocal artist has never faded. She is a true musical spirit who can handle it all. As vocalist, pianist, composer and educator, her pursuit of musical expression has taken her to four continents and through a diverse array of life-enriching experiences.

Performing with the greats like **Lee Konitz, Mark Egan, Victor Lewis, Sheila Jordan, George Mraz** and **Carla Bley**, and with an international solo career that has taken her to Tokyo, Buenos Aires, Berlin, Amsterdam and most of the top New York clubs, Jane has finally released her first CD as a leader, the extraordinary natural habitat/nyc on her own Motief Records.

"This was first and foremost an attempt at bringing together people who had touched my life. These people happen to be great musicians! And to make the music that had been on my mind and in my heart and that I felt finally, I was ready to sing and arrange."

Those great musicians Jane gathered together are some of her closest and most dedicated colleagues. Along with pianist **Tino Derado**, bassist **Ratzo Harris** and drummers **Jamey Haddad** or **Steve Johns**, who are present on most of the tracks, outstanding contributions are made by reedman **Bob Mover** and tuba/ trombonist **Sam Burtis** as

both players and arrangers. Legendary pianist (and a former piano teacher of Jane's) **Sir Roland Hanna** makes a very special guest appearance with a superb solo on Without a Song and offers deliciously sensitive accompaniment on the beautiful **Rogers and Hammerstein** ballad We Kiss in a Shadow.

Pianist **Bob Albanese** also guests on his own The Rainbow I See in Your Eyes, another lovely ballad further graced by Mover's touching soprano sax. Mover, who co-arranged this piece with Jane, also collaborated with her on the aforementioned Kiss and her own Room For Everybody, as well as arranging his own Mystics, an easy swinger with a boppish bridge.

Burtis, a longtime associate of Jane's goes back to when they hung out together on New York's explosive Latin scene back in the '70s, also co-wrote with her for **Western Hemisphere**, a twelve piece ensemble that played regularly in New York clubs between 1982 and 1985. Here they renew that collaborative spirit on three pieces - a delightful blending of **Bob Dorough's** Nothing Like You and the popular standard Sometimes I'm Happy, the soulful Blackstone original, Once 4U, and the moving, mesmerizing piece, The Human Touch.

On the latter, Derado offers a delightfully lyrical turn on accordion, a fine contrast to his energetic piano solos on the grooving Where You At, and the Nothing/Sometimes medley. Harris, Haddad and Johns create the perfect setting for a vocalist; swinging, driving, or providing a soft cradle, dependent upon the context of the piece or the spur of the moment. And always with exactly what Blackstone requires.

Jane stepped away from the piano for this date, instead concentrating on the vocal challenges of the diverse material, much of it drawn from music that had deeply affected her in the past. Some of her favorite artists' versions of We Kiss in a Shadow (**Sonny Rollins**), Nothing Like You (**Miles Davis**), Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea (**Thelonious Monk**) and The Human Touch (**Nina Simone**) inspired their inclusion here, and Jane puts her own unique stamp on them.

Her superb vocal artistry is always on full display whether gently caressing the ballads, scatting on Where You At, swinging gently on Deep Blue Sea, or passionately dramatic on **Ivan Lins'** In the Art of

Survival. "I wanted humor/playfulness, a little toughness, some earthiness, swing and intelligence – I also wanted to portray this incredibly diverse city – like life – it's a New York City thing."

A native of New England, Jane began performing in the late '60s at 12 years old. After touring New England with her own Boston-based blues/rock unit, she moved to New York in the late '70s and soon found herself recording with **Carla Bley** alongside renowned jazz vocalist **Sheila Jordan**.

She immersed herself in everything the rich New York Scene offered, playing large venues with two of the city's best young jazz orchestras, as well as some of New York's top jazz clubs. In 1984 she was awarded an NEA Grant to study piano with **Joanne Brackeen** meanwhile pursuing her vocal studies with veteran vocalist **Anne-Marie Moss** (Manhattan School of Music).

She also made the studio scene – everything from jingles and voiceovers to singing background vocals for notables like **Esther Phillips**, **Deodato** and **Gato Barbieri**. Jane received a Grammy nomination for High Clouds with the **New York Vocal Jazz Ensemble**.

Continuing to be a presence on the late '70's New York Jazz scene, Jane worked with people like **Don Grolnick**, **Lee Konitz**, **Fred Hersch**, and **Benny Aronov** while leading her own trios, which included such well-known sidemen as pianists **Harold Danko** and **Armen Donelian**, bassists **David Fink** and **Chip Jackson**, and drummer **Jimmy Madison**.

In the late 80's Jane relocated to Atlanta, continuing to perform as well as teach, and in 1991, devoted herself primarily to a solo career. That same year she made her first trip to Japan as soloist and teacher in Tokyo, Kobe and Nagoya, and has returned there for five repeat engagements/tours.

She also performed regularly in Europe and South America, where a 1992 month-long engagement in Buenos Aires developed into a relationship with the **International Association of Jazz Educators**, bringing her back there in 1999 for concerts and residency activities.

Returning to New York after the Argentine tour, Jane began to reconnect with her earlier associates and plan for the recording.

An accomplished photographer and actress as well, her influences include **Shirley Horn, Sarah Vaughan, Ella, Betty Carter** and especially **Nina Simone**. But she's also been heavily inspired by **Gil Evans, Miles, Monk, David Sanborn, James Cotton, Ray Charles** and the early **Paul Butterfield Blues Band**.

"I continue to live with the hope that music will 'feed' me – that I should every day take time to listen a little – to sing a little, to mentally and physically practice my chosen art. If I should miss a day, then hopefully I am teaching and showing someone else how to enjoy music, how to find their own personal melodies...no matter at what level."