



The Devil I Knew
Nicole Zuraitis (La Reserve)
 by Anna Steegmann

Nicole Zuraitis is a supremely gifted vocalist, pianist, arranger and composer. In 2024, she won the Best Jazz Vocal Album GRAMMY for *How Love Begins*, becoming the only person to write and arrange an entire winning album in this category. With *The Devil I Knew*, her eleventh album as a leader, she delivers her most ambitious project to date.

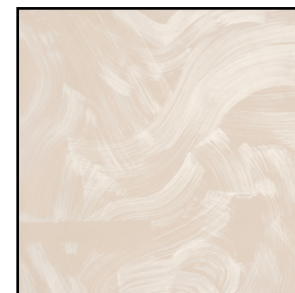
The 20-track concept album is divided into five “chapters” containing “books” (the tracks), which explore themes of self-reflection, intimacy, crumbling romance, grief and transformation. Zuraitis, who wrote (or co-wrote) all but one of the songs, intersperses her lyrics with poems by Dorothy Parker, Emily Dickinson and Edna St. Vincent Millay, which introduces each book. This gives the record a striking throughline, a song cycle that demands to be heard as a complete work. She is joined by an elite roster of collaborators, which includes producer Larry Klein; arrangers Vince Mendoza (strings) and Jerry Hey (horns); Christian McBride, Sam Weber and Larry Klein (bass); Jon Cowherd and Larry Goldings (organ) plus David Cook (piano); Donny McCaslin and Larry Williams (tenor),

Brandon Fields (baritone), Rashawn Ross (trumpet) and Lori Stuntz (trombone); Scott Sharrard, Idan Morim and Gilad Hekselman (guitar); the vocalist’s husband Dan Pugach (percussion), the Budapest Scoring Orchestra plus back-up singers, spoken word artists and others.

Stylistically, Zuraitis resists any single idiom. She sounds dreamy on “The Hardest Part” and funky on “Let Us Hang” (Walter Becker, Larry Klein), shy and moody on a dark trio outing with Pugach and McBride on “He’s a Demon, He’s a Devil, He’s a Doll” (Don Raye, Harold Spina). On “Won’t Make It Out Alive,” driven by McBride’s walking bassline and Goldings’ solid organ work, her vocals pivot smoothly between fragility and defiance. The album’s closing track, Hoagy Carmichael’s “I Get Along Without You Very Well”, leaves her voice beautifully exposed over lush string arrangements. At the album release concert at Dizzy’s Club (Aug. 5) with her touring band (Pugach, Morim, Weber)—sans horns, organ or string orchestra—the vocalist captivated the audience with an impressive vocal range and deeply emotional piano playing. This was most evident on the sparse tracks where she accompanied herself, and in an outstanding duo with McBride on “He’s a Demon...”

As part of her extensive summer, national and international touring schedule, Zuraitis continues to enchant live audiences, and *The Devil I Knew*—live and on record—matches her ambition and execution. Another GRAMMY may well be waiting for her.

For more info visit lareserverecords.com. Zuraitis is at City Winery Sep. 27 and Drom Sep. 30. She is also at COTA Jazz Festival (Delaware Water Gap, PA) Sep. 13 and Avram Theater (Southampton, NY) Sep. 17. See Calendar and 100 Miles Out.



Peace Anthems
Various Artists (Red Hook)
 by Kurt Gottschalk

It might be hard, at least for some, not to think of John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s Vietnam Christmas carol “Happy Xmas (War Is Over)” on initially glimpsing the new compilation *Peace Anthems* and the track “War Is Over” by Ethiopian-Italian singer Martha Deribe and Italian pianist Simone Maggio. Their song isn’t a cover per se, but it might be said to be one in spirit. The 1971 single wasn’t a news alert, it was a message of hope. The unpopular Vietnam War would rage on for several years more—and the planet, of course, would carry on in a constant state of military conflict for another 55 years and counting. The newer “War Is Over” is a lovely lullaby about being safe at home, perhaps sung to a returning soldier, but maybe to anyone who needs to hear it, Deribe ever so soothing and Maggio altogether balm on Fender Rhodes.

The song stands out as the only sung track on *Peace Anthems*, but it’s hardly the only provision of comfort. The set is, start to finish, a warm embrace. Poet Moor Mother delivers a prayer, processed and reshaped by BlankFor.ms. Pianist Amina Claudine Myers, a high priestess of calm within a storm, plays two gorgeous

MA RAINEY MOTHER OF THE BLUES



118 Tracks (5) CDs 108pp color booklet Notes by David Sager

“Now, at long last, Rainey’s low and heavy singing voice makes its mark as never before with fresh-as-morning-dew audio restoration by Doug Benson.” - **Downbeat** ★★★★★

“For both devoted blues scholars and casual historians, this collection stands as the definitive testament to a woman who didn’t just sing the blues; she gave them their blueprint. It is a vital, breathtaking masterpiece that firmly re-establishes Ma Rainey in her rightful artistic position.” - **All About Jazz** ★★★★★



GEORGE H. BUCK JAZZ FOUNDATION



MY FAVORITE THINGS



Listen to Indonesia-born crooner Reggie Pryor pair with Singapore’s legendary “King of Swing,” Maestro Jeremy Monteiro, for their latest album, *My Favorite Things*. Experience lush, sweeping orchestrations by the European Recording Orchestra String Ensemble alongside an elite rhythm section. The album features stunning, masterfully tailored reinterpretations of “My Favorite Things” and “Pure Imagination,” highlighted by a duet with Carmen Bradford. Stream it on your preferred music platform today.