



Kia Records - POCS-1065 - 2019

Eri Ohno: voice
Mamoru Ishida: piano
Yasushi Yoneki: upright bass
Tetsuro Kawashima: tenor saxophone
Shinpei Ruike: trumpet
Akemi Ohta: flute
Dairiki Hara: drums

First the musicians open the concert with the initial notes of **Jelly Fish Blues**, a tune articulated on a languid 3/4, then the singer comes up on stage, swift as an apparition. She looks towards the audience and smiles to it. A smooth gesture of her hand miming a jellyfish, the one to which the tune has been entitled, and suddenly she appears to us as a priestess managing a ceremony for devouts waiting in silent and staid anticipation. Soon after her deep and foxy voice fills the air, the bystanders fall easy prey to her music enchantment.

These are the first minutes of the DVD that has been released along with the latest two - CD set of singer Eri Ohno recorded at Pitt Inn, one of Tokyo's most legendary jazz club. Listening to it it's easy to feel the atmosphere of the grand occasions and to honor it in the better way, Ohno wanted some of the best musicians of Japanese jazz scene to surround her, embracing its different generations.

Eri Ohno and her members prepared a long time for this two-days performance that marks the first live recording of a singer that for over forty years has tramped both Japanese and international jazz stages.

To Eri Ohno, Pit Inn represents a special place for many reasons. It was indeed her, back in 1980, the first singer to be hosted by this renowned club that until that moment had been favored instrumental performances. So, the place where everything began, now becomes the one in which Ohno chose to leave a relevant mark in her career, a music document that, as she writes in the liner notes - testifies what I've become today as a singer capturing some of my live exhibitions, the best chances on which my art reveals itself at its finest.

The matrix of blues has a pregnant meaning for Ohno who reserves to this strong attitude of

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her much of her repertoire, matching it with the refinement of jazz, and interpreting it with the experience of someone who, along the years, has tailor-made these stories to fit her. Her voice often shows itself seductive, pleasantly salacious but at the same time rich of vital energy and lucid hope, through the very stories and emotions that the Blues keeps telling since a long time, especially in tunes like **Love You Madly** and **Sharing the Night with the Blues**.

In such cases it turns out to be essential the contribution of excellent trumpet player Ruike, capable of dispensing notes that dig deep into our souls as only great musicians can do, thanks to his deep sensitivity and expressive charisma translated into intense almost "voiced" solos, ideal pairing for the vocal declamations of the leader (**Throw it Away**).

But Ohno's skills go beyond the vocals, venturing also toward the composition of some originals like the opener **Jelly Fish Blues**, **We Were Meant to Be** and **In Time of the Silver Rain** - that stands out

for a vigorous solo on tenor by Kawashima whose sound can be to the same extent powerful and seraphic - passing through reinterpretations of great classics as Ellington's

Lotus Blossom

, whose lyrics have been re-written in tribute to the many fellow countrymen struck by the recent seismic tragedies in Japan.

A dark and fierce voice that of Eri Ohno, that knows how to send shivers down our spine in poignant ballads such as **Lush Life** and **I'm Glad There is You**, both moments of tender personal confession for the vocalist, here conjured up by the balanced elegance of Yoshida's pianism.

The Best is Yet to Come, instead, presents an arrangement based upon an interesting bass line by Yoneki that contributes to deconstruct the original harmony while pulling out pizzicato tones that put in prominence all the woody features of his instrument.

Ohno's scat turns out to be manifold as simulates an instrumental solo, pays homage to vocalese -when she sings the lyrics that Leroy Mitchell and Skeeter Spight adapted to Charlie Parker's **Confirmation** moving through the impervious turns of Bebop - or improvises in "ranting" style on **Just in Time**, with the vocalist bending and stretching the notes to her will.

But jazz is also joy of life and humor, qualities that Ohno unsheathes several times as when in **La La La You Are Mine**

, another of her originals, uses the characteristic syllabic scan of Japanese language to build a tune whose verse moves on up-tempo, disclosing a fruitful rendez-vous between Ohta's flute and Ruike's trumpet as well as for a jocose interaction with the spectators.

A live, then, in which many are the chances of exchange between the musicians and the audience interspersed with stories that reflect the highs and lows of life and that vast variety of human emotions that Ohno for years has been channeling through her voice.

Related Links:

"Eri Ohno: Live at Pit Inn" album trailer: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujKT95oTWO4

Eri Ohno homepage: www.e-kia.net/erihno/Welcome.html

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