

## **Karrin Allyson**

“She’s been described as a “musician’s musician,” and for once the overused term actually makes sense — “a complete performance by a complete artist — one of the jazz world’s finest.” — Don Heckman, "The Los Angeles Times.

May 2011 marked a milestone for multiple Grammy nominated singer and pianist Karrin Allyson and Concord Jazz — the release of Round Midnight, the thirteenth album in a series dating back to her 1992 debut album “I Didn’t Know About You.”

THIRTEEN ALBUMS! — and now a new self-produced holiday album that’s already won a four-star review from Downbeat and praise in the New York Times and USA Today— That’s worth shouting about. And that’s just what music lovers and critics around the world have been doing — shouting Allyson’s name from the roof tops, marveling at the range of this extraordinary musician, who moves with such ease and authority from the Great American Songbook of Gershwin and Porter to the Great American Jazz Songbook of Duke and Thelonius and Miles and Dizzy, jet-setting to Rio and Paris and swinging back home to pick up Bonnie Raitt and Joni Mitchell and Jimmy Webb. What unites this wide world of music — brings it together and makes sense of it all — is Karrin Allyson’s warmth and depth. She’s not just singing a lyric, she’s telling you her story. And then that becomes your story. You hear the music from the inside out.

Karrin lives in New York City, following a childhood in the midwest, schooling in the Bay Area, a degree in classical piano performance and important stints in Minneapolis and Kansas

City, where she began her recording career with Concord Jazz. Karrin currently spends two days out of three on tour, playing the major jazz festivals, concert venues and clubs of the U.S. and making repeated tours overseas — to Brazil, Japan, Australia and the great cities of Europe.

Among musicians, Karrin is known as a great bandleader and one of the great pleasures of the current scene is listening to her highly developed interplay with her bandmates — it sounds so effortless — but it conceals a deep musical sophistication. It's one of Allyson's great achievements — the result of working for more than a decade with an ensemble of fearless and powerfully committed jazz virtuosi.

Still need convincing? Here's the legendary jazz critic Gary Giddins in *The Village Voice*:

"Allyson coolly stakes her claim. She brings a timbre that is part ice and part grain — incisive, original, and emotionally convincing."

"The Houston Press agrees: "If there's a choir in heaven, someday the exquisite vocalist Karrin Allyson will lead it. She's such an otherworldly talent that the creator probably already has her on heavy rotation."

Heart, intelligence, warmth — an emotional range from bittersweet to sassy — you hear it every time you listen. Make no mistake — Karrin Allyson is singing to you.

## **THE NEW YORK TIMES**

### **Sweet Core, Steely Edge Karrin Allyson at Birdland**

By STEPHEN HOLDEN Published: June 10, 2012

To follow Billy Joel's sober hymn, "And So It Goes" with the frantic chromatic babble of Clifford Brown and Jon Hendricks's "Joy Spring" is quite a leap for any singer. But Karrin Allyson made it look easy on Thursday evening at Birdland. Her show, whose selections change with every set, is a celebration of a 13-album career that is one of the most stable in jazz. She has an easy mastery of bebop, bossa nova, chanson and soft rock, to name four of the many styles in which she is comfortable.

A hallmark of Ms. Allyson's performances is her casual attitude toward phrasing and interpretation. In her unstudied approach she is a cheerful, gamin roustabout hanging out with the guys. Jazz singing is for fun, not for carving statements in stone, although she put some weight behind her duet with the bassist Ed Howard on "'Round Midnight." Filling out her trio were Todd Strait on drums and Bruce Barth, a pianist with a heavy touch that served her well on "I Ain't Got Nothin' but the Blues" and less so on ballads like "I Cover the Waterfront."

With her narrowed eyes, doll face and Cheshire cat smile, Ms. Allyson is also sexy. But in her original blues song, "Sweet Home Cookin' Man," for which she commandeered the piano, the innuendo was minimal. Ms. Allyson knows when to improvise and when not to. "Joy Spring" elicited a scat solo that amplified the song's euphoria.

Underneath Ms. Allyson's sweetness is a core of toughness, which revealed itself in the Blossom Dearie hit "Bye-Bye Country Boy," about a traveling musician's dalliance on the road.

Behind it all is a musician whose concepts are rooted in the songs she sings. "It Might as Well Be Spring," which, when sung by a

woman, is often treated as the fluttery romantic daydream of an ingénue, was accelerated and pumped up with drums to become an exhilarating expression of visceral excitement.