

Pamela Luss

By Eric Nemeyer

Jl: Talk about your new CD *Sweet and Saxy*. What are you particularly excited about with this CD? What are some of the highlights? How does it differ from *Your Eyes and Magnet*?

PL: It is exciting to work with Houston Person for many reasons. It was most rewarding for me because I was learning from a master. His wealth of knowledge is really remarkable. When we worked together on *Your Eyes and Magnet*, we discovered that we had a good chemistry musically; this led to the creation of *Sweet and Saxy*. Not only did Houston pick the right songs for me, songs I hadn't been familiar with before, he was also open-minded about any of my song suggestions. From beginning to end, he was a total pleasure to work with. We accomplished a lot in a short amount of time without any stress. He also has the wisdom to pick songs that worked really well together so that the album has a definite mood and flows all the way through. John di Martino and I worked on the arrangements together, and Houston was always involved. We spoke constantly on the phone, and Houston came to some of the rehearsals, so we could all make musical decisions together. Due to the combined effort beforehand, we were able to record *Sweet*



Credit: Free Press

"You can't be involved in the music business unless you're incredibly passionate about it. This is not just something that you fall into – you have to really want it – and pursue it with a great deal of tenacity."

and *Saxy* in two 4 hour sessions without the need to do many takes. Houston put together a great band, with James Chirillo (guitar), Ray Drummond (bass), and Willie Jones III (drums), in addition to Houston and John, which was another reason as to why the recording session went so smoothly. Houston played on every track but one, and that was because Houston wanted "It's Too Late" recorded with just piano and guitar. It's no secret that Houston really knows how to play with a singer! He literally gets inside my head and knows where I'm going before I do. I like to think that this positive energy comes through on the album. Even the title, *Sweet and Saxy*, was a collaborative effort between the two of us.

Jl: How did this love affair with singing begin?

PL: My Mom says that even as a young child, I was extremely responsive to rhythmic sounds. She says I used to mimic everyday sounds such as singing with a hairdryer or start dancing to the busy signal on the telephone. My parents say that I could sing back notes at a very early age, and that when I started to sing as a small child, it was always in pitch. At an early age,

my dad played the piano for me, so I could sing. My father's family has a musical background, and he plays the piano extremely well for a non-professional player. He has amazingly good taste in songs and singers. He introduced me to singers, instrumentalists, and great songs early on and over the years. My parents continued to nurture my interest in music by always making music available to me as a child and then supporting me in my own musical endeavors as I continued to grow.

Jl: What is it about singing jazz in particular that you enjoy so much, as opposed to other styles of singing?

PL: Again, my dad exposed me to jazz early on. What's great about singing jazz and the American Songbook is we can take any song and make it something completely personal, and something that completely reflects one's own musical thinking and desires. That's the exciting and creative part for me because there are no restrictions in jazz. We can make it our own both rhythmically or conceptually. For me, the idea is to

create something that's intimate and totally personal. Some of the older songs from the American Songbook and even some pop songs from different eras have uniquely beautiful music and lyrics that you may not hear very often in today's environment.

Jl: What steps did you take to start a career as a singer? I know you went to New York University. What steps did you take to begin making a name for yourself, other than just "being really good"?

PL: Thank you for saying that. I took private voice lessons early on, and I also studied music after school and during the summers. After NYU where I majored in Music, I began working at a demanding day job and attempted to do my singing at the same time. I didn't really pursue it full time until I was able to sing at a benefit at Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall. It was there that I met and worked with the wonderful saxophonist Vincent Herring for the first time. Vince produced my first album, which was *There's Something About You I Don't Know* and introduced me to Savant/HighNote Records. During that time, I was also performing weekly at a restaurant called Bruno Jamais in New York City.

Jl: What have been some of the highlights of your career thus far and why?

PL: I really love performing as a singer. I especially love the clubs where you can feel intimate with the audience, so I do feel good every time I perform to a

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