

Who is Pamela Luss?

Pamela Luss is a contemporary jazz vocalist blessed with a beautiful voice, remarkable timing, and sumptuous intonation. She sings classic standards, swinging jazz, and wonderful tunes from some of the unexplored corners of the Great American Songbook in a fresh and original way. She covers a wide range of stylistic ground, from traditional ballads to pop hits to Latin songs and the blues, in interpretations that can be either catchy and finger snapping or slow and tender – and everything in between.

Pamela has released four albums in the past four years, the latest of which is *Sweet and Saxy* (Savant/HighNote Records), a collaboration with Houston Person, as saxophonist and producer. *Sweet and Saxy* was hailed by the *New York Times* as a “strong entry in the contemporary jazz-vocal catalog.” Her singing has been vividly described by the celebrated actor and comic Jerry Stiller, “You’re in great company: Billie, Ella, and Helen Humes. They all had soul and so do you. Thank you for changing my universe when you sing.”

There are a lot of singers out there who sing jazz and the Great American Songbook, and many of them are very good. So who is Pamela Luss and why is she special and different? The answers come from the critics and reviewers who have written about her performances and albums over the past few years, starting with top-rated late night radio host Joey Reynolds. “Pamela Luss is just great. She has a beautiful tone and such perfect everything! I don’t think she ever missed a note in her life, more than that, when she sings, I believe what she’s saying. That’s probably the thing that Sinatra had.”

The most important thing is that Pamela, more than many other jazz vocalists of her generation, truly knows how to tell a story and communicate the basic message of a song. As Elizabeth Ahlfors (of Bistroawards.com) put it, “She sings the song, tells the story, and explores new melodic avenues along the way. With her satin-textured voice, she stretches out a phrase or snaps a word for effective emphasis [and] her assured sense of swing was showcased nice and easy in tunes like ‘Witchcraft.’” The result is, she continues, “All together, the song comes shining through with a Pamela Luss point of view.” Scott Yanow, writing in *The All Music Guide* reviews Pamela’s third album *Magnet* as having “an indescribable magic” and notes that Pamela is a jazz singer who “sticks to the lyrics and keeps her improvisations consistently melodic. The improvising is in her placement of notes and in the feeling that she gives to the words.”

As historian and radio host Michael Anthony (of WHPC 90.3 FM) explains, “What’s truly wonderful about Pamela Luss is that she has a distinctive sound - her own voice. The pop standards always benefit from a fresh interpretation and Ms. Luss delivers. She uses no gimmicks, just her great diction and respect for the songs she sings.” Luss’s storytelling abilities are so acute that columnist Ric Bang, in *The Davis Enterprise*, was moved to name her as “the primo vocalist.” He has written, “Her voice is mellow and excellent, her phrasing exquisite. She can rivet your attention with simple oldies like ‘Day by Day,’ ‘Moon River,’ or ‘Quiet Nights,’ and then grab you by the throat with ‘For All We Know’ and ‘Bewitched.’ You know she’s singing them for your ears alone” (*Magnet* album). In his review of *Sweet and Saxy*, Mr. Bang says, “Because of her mellow voice and gorgeous phrasing, Luss is most impressive on ballads, but this album also contains a number of mid-to up-dash tempo tunes that prove Luss can sing anything.” Joe Lang, of *Jersey Jazz*, agrees. “Luss moves easily from style to style, with Person consistently finding just the right notes while supporting Luss, and shining on his solo interludes.” In a similar vein, vocal expert Dan Singer (in *In Tune* magazine) has added, “Ms. Luss and Mr. Person could probably perform the phone book and receive my cheerful attention.”

In her work with saxophone colossus Houston Person, Pamela has been described (in *Cabaret Scenes* magazine) as sounding "like a sexy saxophone herself." To get more specific, there's the matter of her beautiful vocal tone, which Cathy Gruenfelder of *Jazz Inside*, described as "consistently gorgeous" and added, "No matter what she is singing on, she sounds at home." Illustrating Pamela's international popularity, the Japanese music magazine *Jazz Yell* expressed the opinion that, "Everything about Pamela is first-rate, be it her solid chops, well-endowed voice, or skillful ballad delivery." As Jazz.com says, "Pamela Luss has a rare, hypnotic quality in her voice." While Christopher Loudon of *Jazz Times* calls Pamela's voice "intoxicating," and her performance on *Sweet and Saxy*, her fourth album, as "bulls-eye accurate."

Of course, there's more to singing than having a beautiful voice. Pamela is also blessed with remarkable intonation, and what musicians call "big ears" - the ability to stay on pitch even in unconventional musical situations. Throughout her four albums, Luss is constantly testing her musical mettle by singing with unusual combinations and in duo settings. Her latest album, *Sweet and Saxy*, is a team-up with Houston Person as saxophonist and producer. "Person works well with most singers (i.e. Etta Jones), but here he seems to feed off of the vocal lines Luss dishes out. They're clearly having fun trading phrases on occasion, or in retort when the vocalist makes statements..." (Michael Nastos, *All Music Guide*).

Mr. Loudon (in *Jazz Times*) has also praised "How Do You Keep the Music Playing," from her second album, *Your Eyes*, which is one of Pamela's piano and voice duets with longtime accompanist John di Martino. He described it as "quite possibly the finest-to-date interpretation" of Alan and Marilyn Bergman's song, "she knows how to break (your heart) with excruciating tenderness." Pamela sings Carol King's "It's Too Late" accompanied only by John and guitarist James Chirillo, a performance which *Jazz Inside* praised as "a ballad delivered with a soulful and bluesy style," noting that "Pamela really expresses the meaning of the song." It especially takes a lot of vocal control to sing a melody with just a bass for accompaniment, yet this is what Pamela does with the great Ray Drummond on "Why Was I Born," which the All Music Guide singles out for the way she "enhances the bluesy feeling."

Pamela's sold-out appearance at the Jazz Standard in New York City, a celebration for the release of *Sweet and Saxy*, was described by Lynne DiMenna in *Cabaret Scenes* as, "Great concept, great vocals, great solos and great evening." Pamela has also drawn capacity crowds to nearly every major venue in New York City, including Dizzy's Club Coca Cola, Feinstein's at the Regency, Birdland (in Times Square), The Iridium, Carnegie Hall's Weill Hall, and many other venues. Pamela was perhaps the only singer to appear at both the first annual Jazz Improv Convention and the long-running Mabel Mercer Foundation Cabaret Convention at Rose Hall, which illustrates acceptance into both worlds of jazz and cabaret. In addition to having been a spotlighted artist on iTunes (on the home pages of both jazz and vocals), Pamela's picture has been featured on the covers of *Jazz Inside NY* and *Jazz Yell* (Japan).

The legendary entertainer Jerry Lewis (who presented Pamela on the MDA Labor Day Telethon) put it most succinctly when he described her as, simply, "a wonderful singer."

Discography (all releases on Savant / High Note Records)
 Sweet and Saxy (2009)
 Magnet (2008)
 Your Eyes (2007)
 There's Something About You I Don't Know (2006)