

THE SONGS

MARTINI SET is a blend of cocktail music with an upbeat vibe. I love songs from the thirties and forties, and there's four tracks on the album that come from that period. Not surprisingly, they're all love songs. The romantic songs are standards, but I wanted to find lesser known standards for new non-jazz listeners who might not have heard them.

There's romance in *Old Devil Moon* from the 1947 Broadway musical Finian's Rainbow. The arrangement combines Latin and Swing throughout, and lets the musicians shine.

It's Been A Long, Long Time is possibly not known at all by my listeners; It's a lovely slow, yet joyous, ballad, which was written in 1945. It was written for the lovers who were separated by the wartime, but anyone who's had a long break between relationships can relate to it. I wrote some additional lyrics for the song which describe a love at first sight encounter in a bookshop. It was fun to writing lyrics, and I'll do some more of that on my next album.

I first heard Frank Sinatra singing the 1933 love song by Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler *I've Got The World on a String*. It was written many years earlier for a show at the Cotton Club, a nightclub in Harlem, where Cab Calloway and Bing Crosby first sang it. This composer/lyricist team produced many successful songs, including *Stormy Weather* and *Let's Fall In Love*.

You Stepped out of a Dream was written by Nacio Herb Brown and Gus Kahn. A very romantic song which reminds of some teenage crushes I had where I only saw the objects of my desire through rose coloured glasses. Ironically the guy who wrote the song, Nacio Herb Brown, was divorced four times; it seems that he had a pair of those rose-coloured glasses too. A popular song with instrumentalists; versions have been recorded by some of my favourite musicians, including Stan Getz and Dave Brubeck.

Sympathique is a tribute to one of my favourite bands, Pink Martini (U.S.A). It's all in French. It's sung by a heart-broken woman who's split up with her boyfriend. She's so depressed she can't leave her room, can't go to work, can't eat - she only wants to forget him. She's not proud of the fact that she's succumbing to her dark side but she's emotionally stuck.

Track 5 is a song called *Is That Jazz*, written by Tony King, winner of Australian Songwriter of the Year 2009 (Australian Songwriters' Association). Go Tony! It's a rhetoric look at the jazz world, which I love because it's so self-referential.

THE PRODUCER

Kerrie Biddell co-produced the CD with me. Kerrie is one of Australia's most accomplished singers and teachers, as indicated by her first live gig as Dusty Springfield's backup singer, to touring with bands such as Daly-Wilson's Big band, Dudley Moore and Buddy Rich. Later she was offered a five year contract at the MGM Hotel in Las Vegas, where today you'll find the likes of Tom Jones, Bon Jovi and AC/DC performing. She was one of the artists who performed at the Sydney Opera House's grand opening in 1973, which tells me she's probably even met the queen. This scenario brings a smile to my face, for if Kerrie Biddell had a sentiment even resembling the smallest royalist twinge, I would be surprised.

THE PLAYERS

This band is top-notch, starting with Michael Bartolomei on piano. Kerrie Biddell introduced me to Michael, who has for over 16 years acted as Kerrie's musical director, arranger and accompanist. Bartolomei's compositions have been recorded by Don Burrows and he has worked with industry luminaries such as Normie Rowe, Tommy Emmanuel, The Supremes and The Seekers. I'd already heard Michael's impeccable work on Jane Irving's magnificent album *Beams* so I knew I was in excellent hands. Michael not only played piano on the CD but he recorded and mixed MARTINI SET at his "One Chook Studio" in Bondi, NSW.

Michael was very supportive, listening to my ideas and Kerrie's ideas and incorporating them. (Actually the arrangements were pretty much a group effort, although Kerrie was the backbone there). Michael provides the delightful piano accordion feel embellishments on *Symphatique* for that iconic French touch. He also sat for many hours patiently while I made decisions about the many other aspects of mixing. After the music had been laid down I thought that *Old Devil Moon*, which has a swing-Latin feel, needed some authentic Latin percussion. We called in industry pro Sunil De Silva, who seems to have worked with just about every recording artist in Australia from Midnight Oil to INXS.

Ben Waples on double bass is one of Australia's finest bassists. He is a graduate of the Sydney Conservatorium's Jazz Course and has performed with Vince Jones, Dale Barlow, Bernie McGann and Mike Nock. He was awarded 2nd prize at the

2008 National Jazz Awards and has received acclaim in the experimental jazz group TRIOSK.

James Waples played drums on tracks 1 & 6, with a particularly juicy solo on Track 1, *Old Devil Moon*. James graduated from the Jazz Course at Sydney Conservatorium and has been invited to play drums for Australia's most renowned musicians including Vince Jones, James Muller. He is a third generation musician which shows in his precision timekeeping and astute sense of feel.

Drummer Jamie Cameron (Tracks 2-5) studied at Sydney Conservatorium and also traditional percussion in South Korea. Critic John Shand cites Jamie Cameron as a "player to watch" in his book *Jazz, The Australian Accent* (UNSW Press). He further praises "He oozes musicality, has great ears, is deft, and makes any music he plays both feel good and ripple with excitement".

Cheers!

