



Robin McKelle - Modern Antique

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I was happy to see that a lady I reviewed about this time last year - Robin McKelle - has continued to explore the world of traditional jazz with her newest album, *Modern Antique*, now out on the Cheap Lullaby Records label. It's a nice follow-up to 2007's *Introducing Robin McKelle*, and again features the talented young singer exploring some classic standards, along with a few surprises.

She's wisely chosen to again be backed by a large group, creating the lush, big-band sound that helps evoke the songbirds of an earlier era. Trumpeter Willie Murillo is again serving as arranger and producer, but this time around only takes out his horn on a couple of pieces. However, there are plenty of talented pros performing behind the singer.

The surprises I mentioned earlier include her inclusion of Steve Miller's 1980's pop hit, "Abracadabra," which she manages to skillfully turn into something that fits in with the overall feel of the album. She's also included a composition of her own, "Remember," which is softly offered and obviously performed with feeling but is not a particularly memorable song.

However, the strength of the album resides in the music from the past, the jazz standards that a skilled vocalist can turn into a journey through time, and McKelle delivers the goods. In that earlier review I had compared her singing style to that of softer Keely Smith, but this time around she seemed to me to be more uniquely herself, with a little more playfulness in her phrasing.

Some of the best tracks on the album reflected this, including "Lover Man," and the delightful "Comes Love," given a Latin beat that adds to its appeal. Even Irving Berlin's old chestnut, "Cheek To Cheek," is given new life, and I also enjoyed her performance of Shearing's "Lullaby Of Birdland," which she handles almost reverently. The best song on the album is her heart-felt take on "Save Your Love For Me," a hit for Nancy Wilson and others. McKelle is outstanding here, backed by a full orchestral sound complete with strings and a nice sax solo by Andy Snitzer.

A nice follow-up to her last album, and well worth a listen.