



Diane Hubka Goes to the Movies

SSJ Records - Japan

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by Hajime Sato

I first heard Diane Hubka on her previous album *You Inspire Me* (recorded 2000/01), a gorgeous CD where five master guitarists took turns supporting her. I was very impressed by the tasteful, straight-ahead arrangements and her pure, unforced, charming voice.

Somehow I lost track of her after that, until in October 2006 I got news that she was performing at a jazz club in my area, and I hurried there to see my favorite singer for the first time. I learned that she had moved from her former base in New York to Los Angeles in 2003, and had been performing at small cafes and clubs around town.

When I asked her about a new album, she told me that she had already recorded it and was looking for a label to release it. Since then I wrote about her in my Japanese language blog, and did

what I could to improve her visibility. Then, to my pleasant surprise, I heard news that her new CD would be released in Japan ahead of the US release. What a coup by SSJ Records! And, since my blog article had been published in the Jazz Critique Magazine and caught the attention of SSJ's executive producer, I was given an opportunity to listen to a test sample of that CD.

The pianist is Christian Jacob, well known for his great work in the Tierney Sutton Band and his own trio. Hubka took full advantage of his arranging skills he had proven with his previous work. In addition, she has Larry Koonse on guitar, Carl Saunders on trumpet, Chris Colangelo on bass and Joe LaBarbera on drums. They are all masters of their respective instruments and play actively in the Los Angeles area. This is a very strong band, indeed. You'd be hard pressed to come up with a better one!

On top of that, this is an interesting concept album: a collection of film music. With the combination of eclectic selections that could be a revelation to many listeners, sophisticated arrangements and great performances all around, this is a very well thought-out, high quality album.

Did I mention how wonderfully attractive Hubka's singing is? I'm in awe of her precise pitch and timing that allows her to make difficult songs like "Double Rainbow" and "Invitation" sound easy. Her clear, natural and supple voice makes me smile, and her sunny disposition lifts me up. I can recommend this CD to many jazz fans and jazz vocal fans with confidence. The sound quality is also quite good, perhaps thanks to the DSD mastering which is unique to the Japanese edition.

I am told that *You Inspire Me* will also be released in Japan by SSJ this fall, and Hubka will travel there to perform in December. I hope, and I'm quite confident that she will have a big break in Japan this year.

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佐藤 基

伸びやかで明るい声が元気をくれる

僕がダイアン・ハブカを初めて聴いたのは、2000/01年録音の前作『You Inspire Me』である。ギターの名手5人が入れ替わり立ち替わりサポートするという豪華なアルバムで、趣味のよいストレート・アヘッドなアレンジと素直な歌声が大いに気に入った。

その後は消息を見失っていたが、06年10月に地元LAのジャズクラブに出演するとの知らせをききつけて飛んでいった。きいてみると、NYで活動していた彼女は03年にこちらに引っ越してきたそうだ。小さなカフェやクラブで地道に活動していたらしい。

新作についてたずねると、自己プロデュースですでに録音を済ませていて、発売元となるレーベルを探しているとのことだった。その後、僕もブログに彼女の記事を書くなど側面支援をしていたのだが、このたびなんと、この最新アルバムが日本で先行発売されることになったという。SSJの快挙である！そして、ブログの記事が「ジャズ批評 No.135」のBlog Walkingに掲載された縁もあって、僕はそのテスト盤を聴く機会に恵まれた。ありがたや！

ピアノはティアニー・サットン・バンドや自己名義のトリオで大活躍しているクリスチャ

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ン・ジェイコブ。過去の作品で実証済みのすばらしい編曲能力をここでも大いに発揮している。そして、ギターはラリー・クーンズ、トランペットはカール・サーンダース、ベースはクリス・コランジェロ、ドラムはジョー・ラバーバラ。いずれもLAジャズシーンで活躍している名手ばかりで、

これ以上は望めない最強の布陣だ。

さらに、今回は映画音楽のみを取り上げるというコンセプト。「これも映画音楽だったの？」と驚かされる渋い選曲に洗練された編曲、バンドの見事な演奏が組み合わせられ、よく練り上げられた上質なアルバムに仕上がっている。

そして、ダイアンの歌声のなんと魅力的なこと！「ダブル・レインボウ」や「インヴィテーション」といった難曲をさらりと正確に唄いこなす音程とリズム感のたしかなさには惚れ惚れとするし、透明感のある素直で伸びやかな声は僕に元気を与え、明るい気持ちにさせてくれる。日本盤独自のDSDマスタリングで音質も良好だし、多くのジャズファン、ヴォーカルファンに自信をもってお勧めできる。

きけば前述の『You Inspire Me』の日本盤も今秋SSJから発売されるそうだし、12月の来日公演もほぼ確定とか。日本での大ブレイクを期待したい。

