



Halie Loren: “Butterfly Blue”

Upon its release in Japan and Asia earlier this year, *Butterfly Blue* debuted at #1 Billboard on Japan's jazz album chart, her third consecutive album to top that esteemed chart. Loren's seventh Japan tour this February with her quartet consisted of ten days, three cities, and thirteen shows, with an eight-show run at Tokyo's famed Cotton Club.

With the album's mid-summer's release in the US and rest of the world, the scene has been repeated as she and her band have performed across the US, playing sold-out appearances at the Rochester International Jazz Festival, Montreal International Jazz Festival, Yoshi's in San Francisco, the iconic club Hugh's Room in Toronto, and Seattle's Jazz Alley. She completed her most successful tour in South Korea to-date, followed by performances in Italy (with the Sicilian Jazz Orchestra) and the West Coast (including several dates with New West Guitar Group) this fall.

Butterfly Blue has been described as Loren's most sophisticated and mature release yet, and also her riskiest effort in terms of artistic reinvention and reach. This broad-yet-unified collection of twelve tracks, hailed by many critics and fans as her best yet, creates a soul-steeped journey through the expansive varieties of American music: from textural and catchy original opener "Yellow Bird" to the playfully defiant hope of "Carry Us Through", from the gutsy oomph of Motown on Loren's "Butterfly" to the ramshackle darkness of "Boulevard of Broken Dreams", from the sultry swing of "Stormy Weather" to the percussive and plaintive poetry of album original "Blue" (penned by guitarist/songwriter Daniel Gallo), each song moves with ease into nuances of folk, balladry, jazz, soul and blues. There is fracture here, and heartbreak, an emotional fragility that forever seeks redemption in song and the healing powers of love. And there is joy, a singleness of vision that moves upward and outward seeking the dynamo of connection, both to others and the world at large.

Authenticity and connection is one of the primary keys to Loren's artistic approach: whether it's injecting the American Songbook with old-school soul or finding a familiar thread of nostalgia in newly-penned originals, no matter the language (her repertoire finds her singing in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and more), Loren finds ways to bridge cultures and genres in unlikely and always heart-felt ways. "Music creates greater connection with other people, connection to my purpose for existence," Loren says.

It's rare in this age of instant gratification and immaculate packaging to watch an artist grow and develop over time, much less one as gifted as Halie Loren. Loren's 2006 debut, *Full Circle*, released when she was just 21, revealed an artist talented beyond her years, capable of composing and performing an album's-worth of original work. She released two albums in 2008, the holiday collection *Many Times, Many Ways* and *They Oughta Write a Song*, which featured a simmering cycle of jazz standards as well as another excellent Loren original in the title track. The latter album landed an independent music award for best vocal jazz album and received distribution in Asia (JVC/Victor Entertainment) and North America (Justin Time Records). From there, she released a superb live album, *Stages* (2010), which found Loren broadening her reach into new musical territory -- including a stunning interpretation of U2's "Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" and other forays into the broad byways of American popular music.

Her next album, *After Dark* (2010), featured Loren's original composition, "Thirsty," which won the Independent Music Award for best jazz song of the year. *Heart First* (2012), in which Loren further explored the diverse genres of popular music, was voted the best vocal jazz album of the year by Japan's Jazz Critique Magazine, and was among the top 10 Hot New Releases at Amazon in both the U.S. and Canada, reaching No. 1 on iTunes Canada's jazz album chart. Not surprisingly, *Simply Love* (2013) was an even bigger hit, hitting No. 1 on Billboard Jazz/Japan as well as iTunes Canada's jazz charts.

Butterfly Blue is broadening the view we see and hear of both Loren and her musical spectrum even more. The imagery throughout *Butterfly Blue* speaks to Loren's own artistic progress, as well as to her fifteen-year professional music career during which she's journeyed from childhood prodigy to jazzy chanteuse to award-winning artist—images of strife, loss, cocoons of becoming, things fallen, but also flight and liberation and longing, a new-found sense of freedom, and a return to the vast wellspring of American song. "There is always beauty to be found, even in the most painful experiences and finding ways to reflect that beauty back at the world to remind us that it's still there is, to me, the role of art. That is ultimately the highest calling for me as a music-maker. To give back, to share beauty, and to let it transform me so that it might transform others," says Loren. This idea is most thoroughly embodied in her original song "Butterfly": a rousing, bluesy number that captures the emotional and artistic triumph of the album. "And you say that I just gotta play this game and I'll leave it alive," Loren sings. "And someday I'll look back and see all the pain and fear was a lie... You gotta die awhile to come back a butterfly."