

# George Evans

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## MY PERSPECTIVE

I work as a vocalist in traditional small group settings, interpreting standards and rarities from the American Popular Standard repertoire. Part of the joy in singing this music is in finding neglected gems of the genre and selling new listeners on this unusual material.

## THE IRRESTIBLE FORCE

As a kid I felt like a fish out of water with the pop music of the early 70s. I escaped into movie music and Broadway, and it was there that I found the standards and classic songwriting teams. As I grew older and moved into music and dance training, jazz in its many forms was often the music of choice for jazz, tap and modern dance classes. These different pursuits lead into one another as I found that the songs I loved fit together with the music I was learning to work to as a student of dance. The singers of the classic pop and jazz hi-fi period were presented so beautifully and recorded so completely the works of the great songwriters, that I learned copious tunes and sought out solo performance as an outlet for the music I had learned. Though I miss the physical fitness I gained from the dance, I've never once regretted becoming a musician instead of a dancer.

## I'VE LEARNED A LOT FROM LISTENING

Working as a music archivist for the past 15 years, I've had the opportunity to explore some of the most extraordinary material and performances, so I've learned a lot from listening. I suppose what makes my work unique in jazz in Canada may be a focus on lyrical interpretation that came from my years as a theatre performer and cabaret artist in the New York cabaret community. Finding my place in Canadian jazz has given me the added dimension of being a true jazz interpreter, something I'd likely not have found in myself had I stayed in the States.

## THE PAYBACK

One of my most thrilling performance experiences was stepping onto the main stage at the Montréal International Jazz Festival to perform for 85,000 spectators with a simple jazz trio as the headlining act at prime time on a Saturday night. The scale of the stage and sound made most challenging the task

of performing in the intimate, direct manner I have attempted to cultivate in my club work. To be able to connect with so many people through one single performance was mind-

onto the stage. I had never seen a more sudden or severe storm, and being surrounded by electrical equipment made it all the more frightening.



blowing. Finding the strength in myself to stay focused on the music and remain in the moment was very rewarding.

## CRAZY S%#T

How much space do we have? Honestly, train wrecks are easily dealt with when you work with the kind of players I've been fortunate enough to be involved with on the Canadian scene. If something unexpected happens, I just try to keep my own failings in check and, if I have any doubt, listen more attentively. As for maddening experiences, the first thing that comes to mind is another outdoor performance, when in the middle of the third piece on the program, just as we were hitting a groove, the sky opened up and Noah, the Ark, and all the animals fell from the sky and

## MY CIRCLE

The Canadian scene is its own entity, and I've been fortunate to work with some of Canada's top rhythm section players, most of whom lead their own successful groups. In and around Toronto I have been appearing with pianists Mark Eisenman and Nancy Walker of late, both in different groups; guitarist Reg Schwager is a regular collaborator; bassists Neil Swainson and Steve Wallace; and drummer Archie Alleyne. In the Montréal area I have been happily guesting with the Walli Muhammad trio, as well as my own "Movie Songs" quartet, lead by John Sadowy, and featuring Dave Watts on bass and Jim Doxas on drums. In Vancouver I am thrilled to work time and again with my friend Tilden Webb's excellent trio, featuring Jodi Prosnick on bass and Jesse Cahill on drums. I plan to record live with the Vancouver group on my next trip to the Cellar.

## NATIONAL

On CBC Radio at one time or another I have appeared with a veritable "who's who" in Canadian jazz, both instrumental and vocal. High points for me personally include working with Ed Bickert, Guido Basso, Pat LaBarbera, and Don Thompson (on vibes.) Kevin Turcotte and Mike Murley, and my longtime trumpeter Kevin Dean. As for the States, this year marks my

return to performing in clubs and so my list of collaborators will hopefully grow.

## PRODUCT NOW

Coming in May is Bewitched [MSW-G028]. My sixth solo album and my first to feature strings, Bewitched is comprised of different source sessions, principally a date for CBC Radio that we have augmented with tracks recorded newly for the project. An actual string section is featured on four selections, just enough to create a balance in the finished product.

Also available this year will be a digital-only release anthologizing ballad selections from all six of my commercial releases, plus unreleased bonus material. What it's all about

– the Ballad Collection will be available online through iTunes and other digital storefronts.

#### PRODUCT THEN

As an artist: Movie Songs [Maximum Jazz MAX-16352], Eyes For You [M-Swing MSW-G026], From Moment To Moment [M-Swing MSW-G025], I'm All Smiles [M-Swing MSW-G024], and Moodswing [M-Swing MSW-G023].

As a producer: Here Come The Boys: a Canadian Crooner Collection [Maximum Jazz MAX-15602].

Selection and Sequencing: The Diva Series [Universal/Verve US] 7 discs: Ella Fitzgerald, Astrud Gilberto, Billie Holiday, Carmen McRae, Anita O'Day, Sarah Vaughan and Dinah Washington; Buddy Greco: Talkin' Verve [Universal/Verve US]; Rita di Ghent: The Standards Sessions Vol. 1 (plus notes) [Groove Classic], and Rita di Ghent: The Standards Sessions Vol. 2 (plus notes) [Groove Classic].

#### HIS DEATH CONFRONTED ME...

My last years in residence in the States were spent living in NYC, and during that time my best friend in the world became ill and died a painful and premature death. His death confronted me with my own mortality and provoked a full reevaluation of my life's path and goals. I left NYC and its stresses in 1991 and found a place for myself in Canada, where I had always longed to be, nearer to extended family, and in a more open cultural and social environment. The political and personal freedoms afforded by this move to the country to the north opened every door I had imagined closed in the States and allowed me to take all the risks I'd never dared try. Fifteen years later, I can say that Canada has been good to me, and though I think about my years in the States with a certain nostalgia, I am very happy I made the move and changed my life.

#### IT'S A WIN/WIN SITUATION

Communication. It seems that all of us involved in live performance have a deep need to communicate, be heard and appreciated. Music is the one field that allows such freedom of expression. Individuals in our audience look to us to express through music their deepest and perhaps darkest feelings. They sometimes long for us to openly express through music and words things they might not be able to express for themselves. Audiences also ask for this chance to become a part of our musical experience and share in our joy. It's a win/win situation: we performers get the attention and communication we crave, and audiences get the transference they need.

#### HATE IS A STRONG WORD

Hate is a strong word. However, without rancor I can say that I hate the culture of disposability that has permeated the music industry to such an extent that even in the realm of vocal jazz, it's now all about the "next big thing." I resent that mine is a craft that takes years to master, yet the interpreters marketed and hyped to the public are often right out of the box.

#### SHOUT OUT

I'm missing the Top o' the Senator so much since its demise that I would like on this occasion to give a hearty salutation of respect and appreciation to that room's former manager/booker/impresario, Sybil Walker. Now without a venue to call her own, but

working on the behalf of others, this walking dynamo needs only the proper backing and support to create a new space equal to or better than the place she called home for 16 years in downtown Toronto. Send her your money.

#### STUFF

I cannot limit my favourite records to three, so here are a few honourable mentions: Sarah Vaughan: "Sassy Swings the Tivoli," Ella Fitzgerald: "Clap Hands Here Comes Charlie," Johnny Hartman: "I Just Dropped by to Say Hello," Peggy Lee: "Extra Special," Nancy Wilson: "But Beautiful," and Norma Winstone: "Well Kept Secret."

My favourite colour is green. I like what I had tonight for dinner: triple thick pork chops, mashed potatoes with gravy, and ice cold pints of beer. And real banana or coconut cream pie (where can you get a real one of these north of Kentucky?) My favourite performance venue was the Top o' the Senator, which is now closed, unfortunately.

#### AS I EXIT

I wish the world a decade of peace, without illness, and with plentiful food and equal access to the best music we have to offer.

George Evans appears at The Cellar in Vancouver on May 12 and 13, recording live with the Tilden Webb trio.

Website Address: <http://www.georgeevans.ca>

## Pearl Django

### Hot Club on Tour

Pearl Django is on the road to California in May and June. Check out their Calendar page to find out where and when.

We'll see you there!



[www.pearldjango.com](http://www.pearldjango.com)

is the place to find out where Pearl Django is performing, listen to cuts from their CDs, sign up for their mailing list and much more.

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