

Cat Conner

After singing for many years with some of the hottest West Coast jazz musicians, Cat Conner released her first CD, called "Cat Tales," on Rhombus Records in June 2012. Featuring the great George Mesterhazy on piano, Gene Cipriano on woodwinds, and Jim Hughart on bass, the CD has made critics take notice. All About Jazz called Cat's voice "radiant" and said, "This is an impressive debut for a singer who should be much better known."

Cat is a multi-talented performer who has also studied acting, musical theater, and improv, and has even written and recorded an album of children's songs. But her first and true love has always been music. A Toronto native, she fell in love with jazz at the age of 14 when her mum took her to Massey Hall to hear and meet backstage the one and only Ella Fitzgerald.

She was hooked, and when she was a bit older, she took a job as a hostess in Toronto's Hook & Ladder Jazz Club so she could hear in person, every night of the week, some of the greatest big bands ever, like the Count Basie and the Duke Ellington Orchestras. That's when Cat caught the attention of Stan Getz, who heard her rich speaking and singing voice and set her up with a vocal teacher. And that was the beginning of Cat's musical journey as a jazz performer. Before long, she was singing with some of the biggest names in Canadian jazz, like Peter Appleyard.

Drawn by the warm weather and a spirit of adventure, Cat moved to San Diego in the mid 80's and began singing in jazz clubs, with some of the stellar musicians that are drawn to Southern California. There, she co-led combos and a sextet with bassist Chris Conner. Cat moved to Los Angeles in the 90's and has continued to sing in jazz clubs up and down the West Coast with such great artists as Gary Foster, Joe Pass, Don Menza, Gary Smulyan and Joe LaBarbera.

Her old friend, the amazing pianist George Mesterhazy, convinced Cat to go into the studio and record her first CD.

Recently Cat has sung with Emil Richard's Big Band, Pete Christlieb's Tall & Small Band, has her own all star trio as well as being is a member of David Angel's Saxtet, performing at the world famous Lighthouse in Hermosa Beach.

In 2013, Cat will be a featured artist, along with singers Sue Raney, Don Shelton, and Michael Dees, at the American Jazz Institute's tribute to the legendary Frankie Laine.

Conner is simply a natural. No gimmicks, no show biz, no schmaltz, no frosting. There's a direct sincerity in the way she tells the stories of these lyrics. Few can attain it, and you know it when you hear it. Conner is the understated real deal. - Jazz Scene, Oregon