

SARAH WELLER BAND: Stormy (Daisy Dog)

Written by Bill b

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The Sarah Weller Band is a new vocal-led UK jazz quintet but Sarah herself is no newcomer. A sometime Perrier Jazz Award finalist, she's previously fronted two other bands - Urban Dwellers and Heikatsu and in between times she's worked for Jazz FM and Ronnie Scotts. Being in and around the jazz scene has given Sarah a wealth of experience and it shines though on this lovely 12 tracker . The album is a set of very-well chosen but not so obvious covers, all selected to suit her robust, flexible and emotive voice – heard to best effect on the title cut.

'Stormy' is a well known tune. Originally recorded by the Classics IV, it's been covered by people as diverse as Billy Eckstine and Diana Ross but Ms Weller does it her own way. Her version is busy and energized and features a wonderful duel between Simon Golding's guitar and Ross Stanley's Hammond. The song is also offered in two extra mixes. Both take the tune to the dance floor via Nicolas Conte's bass-led tweak and Mr Mundy's sharper, "old school" re-tooling. Conservative jazz purists might balk at these extras; but they add an extra dimension to the album and show a measure of confidence that many new jazz vocalists lack.

Sarah's confidence is shown in many of her other choices. She's brave enough to tackle things like Duke Ellington's 'In A Sentimental Mood' and Irving Berlin's 'Get The Behind Me Satan'. Like 'Stormy', she does 'em in her own way – undaunted by the litany of greats that have previously recorded them.

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The album's other highlights include a bluesy reading of Stanley Turrentine's 'Sugar' and a gentle version of Ivan Lin's 'Love Dance' – one of several Latin flavours on offer. Unsurprisingly, I've noticed that both these cuts have been play-listed by Jazz FM. Both are hugely radio friendly yet offer intrigue and excitement in a way, say, that Clare Teal's "safer" recordings don't. And you know that's not a bad reference point. Ms Teal and Ms Weller are both steeped in jazz knowledge and history and both possess mighty fine melodic voices, but here Sarah takes just a few more chances and the album's the better for that. Find out more @ www.sarahweller.com

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