

Lori Zuroff

Singer Lori Zuroff has been a longtime mainstay in the Metrowest music scene performing with her band Lola Sweet & The Burbanites, the Acton Community Chorus, the ladies barbershop group, Sweet Adelines, and running various blues jams throughout the region. Now, Lori is stepping out on her own with a new jazz album entitled Ladybug. It's a record that reveals a singer at the top of her game and one that chronicles another chapter of her ongoing musical journey...

METRONOME: Where are you from?

I was born in Boston and grew up in Newton, MA.

METRONOME: Were you raised in a musical family?

Not really. I've always loved music though. I remember my mom and I dancing to records in the living room and singing along with the radio.

METRONOME: How long have you been singing?

I didn't start singing until I was 39. I joined a women's barbershop group called, Sweet Adelines. That's where I learned a lot because it was acapella and we didn't sing separate parts. You really had to listen.

Then I joined the Acton Community Chorus and sang as an alto for 7 years. I did some small group work with them. Finally, a friend of mine asked if I wanted to be part of his rock group and I said, Yes! I've been in other bands since then too.

Now I have my own 5 piece group called Lola Sweet, which, before the pandemic, performed a lot in the Metrowest area

METRONOME: Did you ever take formal lessons?

Not until I decided to try singing jazz. I went to the Interplay Jazz Camp in Stowe, Vermont, which was run by saxophonist, piano player and Dartmouth professor, Fred Haas, and his wife, singer Sabrina Brown. It was truly wonderful. I learned so much and made a good many super talented friends in the faculty and students.

After a few one week summer sessions, I contacted Rebecca Parris and asked if I could study with her. I started taking lessons with her at her home in Duxbury, but couldn't really afford to pay for weekly lessons. After a while, she said she really wanted to work

with me and offered me a scholarship for a year, for no pay.

METRONOME: Do you play an instrument?

I started playing ukulele. It's so much fun.

METRONOME: Who introduced you to jazz?

Probably my dad. He had some great old records (which I still have) like Nat King Cole and Mel Torme.

METRONOME: Who are some of your musical influences?

As far as singers are concerned, in rock and blues it's Bonnie Raitt, Linda Rondstadt, Etta James, Susan Tedeschi, Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder. In jazz, I like Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson, Billie Holiday and Sheila Jordan (who was also a teacher at Interplay).

METRONOME: Have you been in any Boston-area bands of note?

I was in the Second Story Band and Calaboose. Currently I'm singing in the Midtown Horns (a 14 piece big band) as well as my own rock & blues outfit, Lola Sweet and the Burbanites.

METRONOME: How did you become involved with The Midtown Horns?

I answered an ad looking for female backup singers for a big horncentric band. They play contemporary to Motown to classic rock to Latin rhythms, blues and soul.

METRONOME: Who's in that group?

The band was started by bass player Greg Kojoyian and includes a 5 to 6 piece horn section, including Janusz Kowalski on sax, Greg on bass, Brian MacDougall on drums, Jeff Franklin on guitar and John McManus on keys along with 2 male lead singers, Marty Orio and Oscar Wilson and 2 lead/backup female singers, Sharon Sky and myself.

METRONOME: When did you form

Lola Sweet and The Burbanites?

I formed the band about 5 or 6 years ago with my friend, guitarist Andrew Shiff. We then brought in Jim Medvedeff on keys, Al Garay on bass and Jon Golden on drums. Sometimes we're lucky enough to get Bob Adams on sax.

METRONOME: Are you Lola Sweet?

I am Lola. In fact, some friends had hats made for me for my birthday last March and any fans who wanted one.

METRONOME: What kind of music does Lola Sweet & The Burbanites play?

We play rock, roots, blues, R&B and a little jazz. It's a mixed bag.

METRONOME: How many albums do you have out under your name?

Ladybug is my first CD.

METRONOME: It sounds great. How long was it in the making?

I started about a year ago picking songs and working on arrangements with Molly Flannery, my piano player. We scheduled a recording date for the end of March, but it got pushed out twice. We finally recorded at the end of July.

METRONOME: Who was in the studio with you?

It was just 4 of us: myself, Molly, Bill McCormack on bass and Miki Matsuki on drums. I brought in Bill Vint later to lay down some saxophone tracks.

METRONOME: How did you meet your piano player, Molly Flannery?

I met Molly a couple of years ago at a jazz jam at the Acton Jazz Cafe. She and Bill and Miki were part of The Gwenn Vivian Band. After awhile, I asked Molly to do some gigs with me and we included Bill.

Molly's a wonderful piano player with million dollar ears. She helped arrange most of the songs on the Ladybug CD. Through working together, Molly and I have become good friends. She says we're super chill together (laughs). We get together virtually once a week to hang, drink some wine and work on tunes.

METRONOME: How did you come to enlist bassist Bill McCormack in to the project?

Molly introduced me to Bill. Molly, Bill and I have done a bunch of gigs together.

METRONOME: How did Molly and Bill McCormack meet?

I believe they also met at the AJC. Bill, Molly and Miki [Matsuki] have been playing together for at least 10 years.





Molly Flannery



Miki Matsuki



Bill McCormack

Naturally, it was an obvious choice to enlist them for my CD.

METRONOME: How did you first come to know Miki Matsuki?

I met Miki through Molly. She's a great drummer. She's worked with a number of great artists in Boston and beyond that includes Wynton Marsalis, Joanne Brackeen, George Garzone, Darren Barrett, Dave Bryant, Stan Strickland, Charlie Kohlhase, Eric Hofbauer, Garrison Fewell and others.

METRONOME: Saxophonist Bill Vint adds a nice touch to the recording. How did you meet him?

Funny, I didn't meet Bill Vint until he came to the studio. He came highly recommended by my friend Louise Alexandra Koopman, a Dutch jazz vocalist. I sent him my music charts and tracks and he walked in and laid down some amazing stuff.

METRONOME: Are Molly, Bill and Miki your regular band now?

I hope so for the future.

METRONOME: Where did you record Ladybug?

At PBS Studios in Westwood, MA.

METRONOME: Who engineered the project?

Peter Kontrimas.

METRONOME: How did you meet Peter?

I met Peter through Rebecca Parris. He played with her regularly and recorded her as well.

METRONOME: How long did it take to record Ladybug?

We recorded in one day, but I went back to the studio at least 4 or 5 more times to tweak the tracks and add different vocals where I thought it was needed.

METRONOME: How did the song selection for the album work? Were you performing these tunes live before recording them?

These are some of my favorite jazz tunes. I've sung all of these songs at my gigs except, "You Made Me Love You" and "For All We Know." I just heard them and fell in love.

METRONOME: Tell me about your relationship with Rebecca Parris. How did you two meet?

Rebecca was a wonderful singer and a great teacher and friend. It was a big loss to our music community when she passed away almost 3 years ago.

METRONOME: What inspired the name for the album?

My dear friend, Judy Marnoy Furlin, did the painting for the CD's front cover in a dedication to her brother who passed away last year. I saw it and loved it... red is my color. Then she decided to add this 3D ladybug to the painting (which I have framed in my front hall). It just seemed

to fit. I love ladybugs. They represent luck, but also (according to lore) good fortune, true love, innocence, needing to make the right choices in life, and happy resolutions. All good.

METRONOME: Before the pandemic, how often did you perform live?

Between my big band, rock band and jazz gigs, I was performing between 4 and 10 gigs a month. I co-ran a weekly blues jam for a number of years starting at the Local Table in Acton which became the Orange Door. Then we moved to the gallery at West Acton Villageworks. We restarted a year ago and was going great guns at our newest venue, the Maynard Rod and Gun Club when Covid hit in March and we called it off.

Lola Sweet has played at Main Streets Cafe in Concord, Pho Dakao in Framingham, Skyboxx in Natick, Sunday Funday at Brodie's with Chris Fitz (part of the band), Waydowntown in Provincetown and many more venues including some private parties.

For jazz, I've played Main Streets Cafe in Concord, The Ellis Room at Magnolias in Brookline, the Sherborn Inn, the Orange Door in Acton, the Java Room in Chelmsford and Monkfish in Cambridge.

With the Midtown Horns, we play a lot of summer outdoor shows like Palmer's Yacht Club in Salem and a private party at the Encore Casino in Boston.

I belong to the Women in Music Gathering Group in Boston that performs around town doing mostly fundraisers. I've also been a part of Musicians on Call, an organization that sends musicians into Boston Floating Children's Hospital in Boston and the Veteran's Hospital in West Roxbury to entertain the patients and staff. I sing with my friend Dan Kiely who plays guitar and harmonica. It's a truly wonderful experience.

METRONOME: Do you have any music videos on YouTube?

Yes. You can find a jazz video under my name with three songs that I made with Molly and a bass player named Jon Dreyer at Slater's in Bolton, Massachusetts. You can also watch some old rock stuff.

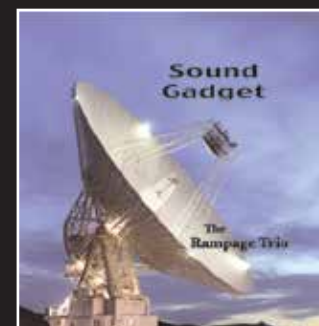
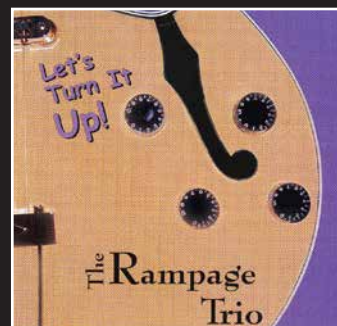
METRONOME: What does the future hold for you musically?

Well, I hope to be able to finally do a CD release party for this spring or summer. I also plan to do a livestream on the Global Music Foundation site with Molly and Bill. They've got some great concerts and master classes.

This summer I'm booking some outdoor concerts with my band, Lola Sweet, and have some scheduled outdoor shows with the Midtown Horns. We're tentatively booked to play on a cruise ship in July or August.

-- Brian M. Owens

The Rampage Trio



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