

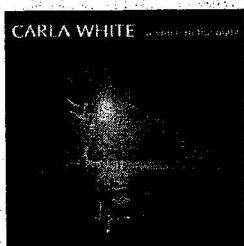
no coincidence that guitarists perform and/or record together (Hall/Metheny, Zoller/Pass, McLaughlin/DiMeola, Paul/Martino, Coryell/Remler, Byrd/Kessel/Ellis, Pizzarelli/Pizzarelli). A kinship arises when guitarists convene to exchange ideas and relax in the calming, exciting effects of the instrument. The transcendent language of music bridges the separations between musicians for instantaneous responsiveness and intuitive understanding, no matter what the backgrounds. Such is the case with Michèle Ramo ("Mick") and Mundell Lowe ("Mundy")—"Mick & Mundy," a joint name that brings back the reminder of a television program from decades ago.

Still, the music of *I Didn't Know about You* is remarkable on several levels. For one, it indicates the empathetic understanding of musicians born continents—and cultures—apart, Ramo in Sicily and Lowe in Mississippi. Although Ramo's start was in classical violin and Lowe's was in country music, the attraction of jazz, with its common vocabulary and musical tradition, brought them together. Mick & Mundy no doubt are guitarists of similar sensibilities offering each other mutual respect.

Like most guitar duos, Ramo and Lowe's switches between melodic improvisation and rhythmic backup. The difference here, as is often the case with the Pizzarellis, is Ramo's use of the LaBella 8-string "Ramo Hei-D Mostro," which allows him to add greater depth and motion to his accompaniment. Even so, it's immediately apparent that the two guitarists share similar feelings for the music. They don't attack the songs of *I Didn't Know about You*; they ease into them.

Comfortable with the CD's song list, Ramo and Lowe are consistently relaxed and explorative throughout, from the too-seldom-heard-now "Moonglow" to the Ellington classic, "Satin Doll." Beyond the standards allowing for the ease of interaction over well-known changes, the CD includes two notable standouts. "Manhã de Carnaval" reveals Ramo's ability to extract ever-changing colors from a song associated with the beauty of the acoustic guitar. And second, "Sicily" is the album's only track that's sung. In this case, soprano Heidi Hepler, Ramo's wife and co-writer with Ramo of "Sicily," helps to suggest the scenic beauty of Ramo's homeland: "Dream of marble walls / Shepherd's flute sound

calls / Wooden boat far at sea... / Oh my Sicily." Except for the concluding tribute to Ramo's homeland, *I Didn't Know about You* features some outstanding matured and inviting interpretations of standards that Mick and Mundy have been playing for years. Now, for the first time, they play them together on CD as well.



## Carla White

**A VOICE IN THE NIGHT—Bright Moon Records, www.carlawhite.com**

*Time On My Hands; It's Kind of Lonesome Out Tonight; You and the Night and the Music; Charade; Four On Six; May I Come In?; I Still Love You; Sweet and Slow; Your Mind Is On vacation; What Are you Doing the Rest of Your Life?; Peace of Mind; I Had No Time To Hate; I'll Never pass This Way Again.*

**PERSONNEL:** Carla White, voice; John Hart, electric & acoustic guitar; Dean Johnson, bass; Matt Wilson, drums & music box; Claudio Roditi, trumpet & flugelhorn.

By Margot Elizabeth Meyers

Carla White's recent offering *A Voice in the Night* is a genuinely beguiling labor of love that tells a story of a life lived and a life embraced, and, roads less traveled. A combination of innocence and wisdom, Ms. White's voice is wrought with emotional textures that range from soft and delicate whispers, to the rich and ripened tones of a well seasoned horn. What impressed me right from the beginning of this CD was the comfortable ease with which Ms. White maneuvers her instrument from one tempo to another from one mood to another caressing and carving each note of the melody along the way and giving importance to every word while expertly weaving them all together without missing a beat or dropping a sigh.

The tastefully selected songs include a mixture of classic standards like "What Are You Doing The Rest of your Life", "You and the Night and the Music" and "May I Come In?"—a song I associate with the great Nancy Wilson—but Ms. White's vulnerable rendition of the beautiful old chestnut, is but one of the many highlights on this CD. John Hart's sensitive and melodious accompaniment seamlessly fuses with White's voice contributing to the flowing honey-like sound that prevails throughout this recording.

The CD starts off swinging with the vintage treasure "Time on My Hands" and sets the stage for White's soft and supple vocals to put you in the mood for romance on the slow and easy ballad, "It's Kind of Lonesome Out Tonight". "You and the Night and the Music" is an instinctual response to the question posed on the previous

cut and lends itself naturally to the variegated Bossa Nova feel. The lyrics are delivered in both Spanish and English and beautifully display another dimension of White's voice and emotional depth.

The music continues to build off of itself transforming and evolving from selection to selection pulling you in the more you listen. White's phrasing on the fragile and mysterious *Charade* is poignantly reflective and delicate in its approach. Wes Montgomery's syncopated "Four On Six", an upbeat swinging bopper, directly follows in a whimsical flurry of White's well placed and well pitched scatting that trips phonetically over the changes and gives plenty of incentive for the musicians to stretch and play freely within the harmony. The band gets down and dirty with the help of John Hart's awesome guitar work on two back to back blues—the seductively playful "Sweet and Low" and Mose Allison's signature piece "Your Mind Is On Vacation". Hart is an extremely accomplished and versatile guitarist with fierce blues chops and more than one trick up his musical sleeve. On *Peace of Mind*, a minor blues, his sound was liquid and spellbinding adding colors of haunting intrigue to the hypnotic sound of this the only original song on the CD. "Peace of Mind" is the centerpiece to which all roads lead and ushers in the overall spiritual theme—peace, serenity and healing—the journey's end. Everyone shines on this one from Dean Johnson's rich pulsing bass lines against Matt Wilson's creative fills, expressive mallet technique and Afro Beat rhythms to Claudio Roditi's pure sweet tone and fluid articulation that is ever present throughout the entire CD.

The free improvisation to an Emily Dickenson poem "I Had No Time To Hate" was exquisitely conveyed and made for an elegant segue into "I'll Never Pass This Way Again". The aptly chosen closing song contains heavy emotional content that is dripping with serene gladness and truth. Some songs give you goose bumps, some give you a good bump on the head others bring you to tears, this one does all three.

One of the many delights of *A Voice in the Night*, is its beckoning unpredictability -- a direct reflection on the relaxed atmosphere in which it was recorded. In the end, the "sound" is what people remember the most and that is always the defining factor. Recording engineer supreme, Jim Anderson, artfully blended each individual musician's heart and soul sounds into a mural of memorable feelings—it's obvious to the listener that everyone who took part in this labor of love gave something very personal and special to it. When that happens it makes for great music... mission accomplished.

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