



Raneé Lee *Lives Upstairs*

JUSTIN TIME 230

★★★★

Winner of the 2010 Juno award for Vocal Jazz Album of the Year, Raneé Lee's 10th album on Justin Time was recorded live at Upstairs, Montreal's premier jazz club. One of the most successful jazz vocalists on the Canadian scene, this native New Yorker has made Montreal home for the past 35 years. The repertoire she chose for this set, assembled with the expressed intention of exploring "the various shapes of love," offers fresh takes on standards, compositions by Pat Metheny and James Taylor and one of Lee's originals.

Lee reportedly learned both Jimmy McHugh's "I Just Found Out About Love"—the fast-paced show tune opening the set—and Johnny Mandel's "A Time for Love"—perhaps the most evocative tune on the album—directly from Shirley Horn. Her interpretations surge with energy, and though Lee has drawn comparisons to Sarah Vaughan, she has a style and delivery all her own. Victor Young's "Beautiful Love" receives a breezy, Brazilian-flavored treatment, while the Jerome Kern-Johnny Mercer classic "Dearly Beloved" swings hard. Lee makes an interesting choice with one of Metheny's lesser-known compositions, "A Crooked Road"; with lyrics by Oregon's Samantha Moore, its driving rhythm and captivating melody offer yet another vehicle for Lee's unique, poignant readings. James Taylor's "Fire And Rain" is tinged with a gospel feel, and Lee's own "The Storm" is an effectual blues capturing the yearning for a lover ("Missing you is like the darkness just before the storm/And nothing's gonna hold back the storm"). The band swings, wails and whispers, offering Lee perfect support throughout. Capturing the intimate ambience at Upstairs, the audience's enthusiasm and the essence of Lee's performance, this is a fine introduction for those unfamiliar with her work. —*Sharonne Cohen*

Lives Upstairs: I Just Found Out About Love; In Love In Vain; A Time For Love; A Crooked Road; Four; Gershwin Medley; Fire And Rain; Beautiful Love; The Storm; Dearly Beloved. (62:19)

Personnel: Raneé Lee, vocals; Richard Ring, guitar; Morgan Moore, bass; John Sadowy, piano; Dave Laing, drums.

Ordering Info: justin-time.com