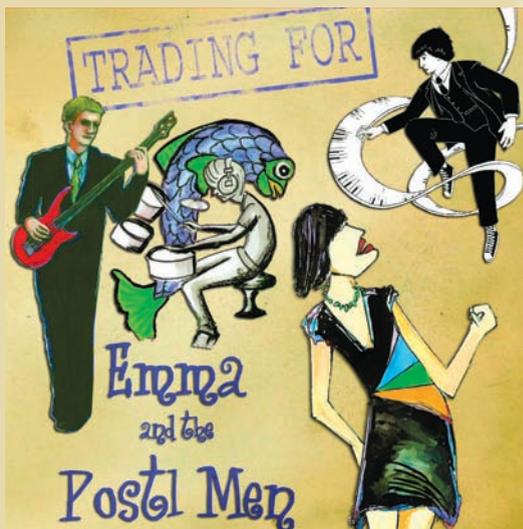




# JAZZY

## THE SOUND OF EMMA'S WORLD



BY DAVID MORRISON

Not that I'd ever tar them all with the same brush, you understand, but if asked to consider the stereotypical teenager, it's clear one noun unlikely to spring to mind is "sophistication." That is, unless the average youth was just like Qualicum Beach jazz singer, Emma Postl.

At eighteen, she's admittedly more adult than adolescent, but listening to her debut album *Trading For* (Independent), a genuine urbanity exudes from her slinky, mature performances. A firm grasp of the nuances of jazz vocal seems evident, yet Postl's delivery is so natural I'm convinced it comes to her intuitively. Her scat singing, for example, is quite brilliant for such a fledgling artist. A jazz technique that could so easily go hideously awry in inexperienced hands, Postl bippity-bop-skoobie-oobie-doobie's her way through *Trading For* like a veteran.

"My mom is a huge jazz fan and introduced me to Ella (Fitzgerald) when I was very young," she tells me from Frankfurt, where this

CD cover art by Adrienne Gibbs, Vance Beatty,  
Julie Jenkins and JM Kruit

promising singer is working as an *au pair* for the next twelve months. Way across the globe, she fortunately finds herself in a musically stimulating household, so is pursuing opportunities to further hone her craft, "My 'host-mom' is an opera singer and teaches singing lessons during the week, which I get to listen to while I work. She also conducts a gospel choir on Fridays, which I'm singing with!" I tell you now, should this effervescent character tackle gospel music with the same fervour as she does jazz, it'll be something worth breaking doors down to hear.

While her peers may be banging their heads to Green Day, Rascal Flatts or 50 Cent, Postl tunes into an unconventional teenage playlist of Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong, Sarah Vaughan and other jazz giants. There is also room in her iPod for a little Leonard Cohen and Joni Mitchell, or compelling alternative artists such as Regina Spektor and Vancouver's Destroyer, but it's the jazz classics that steal Postl's heart. Considering she sounds born to sing them, it's little wonder.

Although pedantically speaking Postl's live debut came in Grade 5 performing César Franck's haunting *Panis Angelicus* as a duet – an experience she remembers as "really scary, but fun" – her jazz bow came during an open mic night at Qualicum Bay's former Cola Diner with a take on Hoagy Carmichael's *The Nearness of You*, latterly popularized by Nanaimo superstar Diana Krall. "I was so nervous and my mom kept gently nudging me to go up and sing! I finally agreed and ran out to the car and listened to the song three times to make sure I remembered all the words. I think it went well; I got a lot of applause!"

Any Cola Diner patron clapping in approval that evening won't be surprised to discover that Postl went on to bag awards at MusicFest Canada in 2005, this year also receiving a prize for *Most Outstanding Vocalist*. But let's not forget, despite the warranted attention on her blossoming talent, that she's not achieved this alone. Her stunning band *The Postl Men* (natch!) were also recognised for their achievements in 2005.

Musicians with a feel equal to their 'leader' for the subtleties of jazz performance, drummer Alex Grant, bassist Gareth Evans and keyboard player Mike Cox are, unbelievably, all also only eighteen years-old. And what a band this is, swinging along coolly with the groove of seasoned session players behind Postl's thrilling vocal gymnastics. Grant and Evans also get to duet with Postl (respectively) on *Baby It's Cold Outside* and an effective cover of the Tears for Fears/Gary Jules pop smasheroonie *Mad World*. Looking at the material that precedes it - composed by the ilk of Dizzy Gillespie and Antonio Carlos Jobim, immortalized by such as Julie London and Frank Sinatra – this surprising inclusion shouldn't work...but it sure does.

What is particularly meritable about this lush debut is that all thirteen songs were recorded in a single day, "We really didn't have enough time to be perfectionists about the recording and the songs. It was a great experience, but I would have liked to take a bit more time just to sit with the songs and make them the best they could be," Postl explains.

She needn't concern herself too much with that; if *Emma and the Postl Men* maintain this standard, it won't be long before they're handed both time and budget to nail the next collection of songs as they see fit. From this group of young sophisticates, it promises to be something very special. ~



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