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"So in Love," Perry Beekman Sings And Plays Cole Porter (Perry Beekman 884501878326) Street Date June 4, 2013

Perry Beekman-guitar & vocals, Peter Tomlinson-piano, Lou Pappas-bass

From the time of his Jazz Epiphany – upon hearing “jazz guitar pioneer Charlie Christian, and the classic recordings of Billie Holiday and Lester Young” – at the age of 15, outstanding guitarist/vocalist Perry Beekman has committed himself to the classic traditions of jazz, particularly by means of the Great American Songbook.

For his first CD as a leader, Perry has selected one of the most beloved and prolific of these composers, Cole Porter, for *So In Love – Perry Beekman Sings And Plays Cole Porter*. Accompanied by the remarkably empathetic paring of Peter Tomlinson and Lou Pappas on piano and bass respectively, Perry has selected 15 wonderful Porter songs, all but one culled from Broadway musicals made immortal by Porter’s genius.

In conceiving the CD, Perry considered calling it “A Tale of Two Coles” as he also offers homage to another of his musical heroes, Nat ‘King’ Cole, who revolutionized popular song with his drummerless trio of the same instrumentation. Appealing to him because “It allows for both a great deal of individual expression, and the ability to create a wonderful group dynamic” Beekman provides full evidence of that instrumentation’s effectiveness with this delightful CD.

Beekman has taken great care in providing an impressively tasteful approach in both selecting repertoire, as well as creating an ideal balance of deftly arranged and improvised interpretations. He has also fully respected Porter’s expressed desire – as a rare composer who wrote both the music and lyrics – to stick to the lyrics as they were written. Nonetheless, Perry’s interpretive imagination breathes special individuality into each of these highly regarded classics.

In true jazz fashion, the interplay of the trio is magical – fully supporting Perry’s vocals while maintaining a deep sense of swing and total spontaneity. The musicianship is exemplary, but never allows its virtuosity to interfere with the goal of presenting great songs in a highly compelling manner. Unquestionably, the focus is upon the splendid vocals and guitar mastery of Perry Beekman. His rich voice and impeccable phrasing blend perfectly with his striking guitar playing, evoking the rhythmic clarity of Barney Kessel, the single line improvisational sparkle of Johnny Smith and the soulfulness of Grant Green – all among his influences. Short solos permeate most of the vocal-oriented works; each one ideally suited to the structure of each piece and without a wasted note or missed opportunity for expressiveness.

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There are two instrumentals. *Always True To You In My Fashion* (from 1948's *Kiss Me Kate*) is a vividly surging foray that gives everybody a chance to stretch a bit, while *My Heart Belongs To Daddy* (from *Leave It To Me*, 1938), is in delightful jump style stoked by vibrant walking bass. Another piece – the gorgeous *In The Still Of The Night* (*Rosalie*, 1937) – begins as an instrumental, with Perry's solo exploration in an almost Baroque, fugue-like fashion melding into a beautiful vocal plea. An evocative *tour de force*.

Another song from *Kiss Me Kate* is *So In Love*, a sinuously gentle ballad in a samba style with nearly telepathic interplay by the trio. Perry's love of Brazilian music is also in evidence in two of Porter's most popular songs. *I Get a Kick Out Of You* (*Anything Goes*, 1934) features a deliberate, moody vocal that lingers in tantalizing fashion just behind the gentle Bossa Nova beat; while *Night And Day* (*Gay Divorce*, 1932) strikes a somewhat bouncier mood, along with a delicious arco bass solo and rich piano flourishes. It's unlikely that Cole Porter was thinking in a Brazilian mode when he wrote these two songs, but he most certainly would approve.

Swing of a more traditional jazz style is up front on *Just One Of Those Things* (*Jubilee*, 1935), an irresistibly joyful, full-throttle swinger. Likewise, *I Love Paris* (*Can Can*, 1953), a deeply grooved easy swinger with Perry's vocal swirling in, around, and under the insistent rhythmic thrust. *Anything Goes* is a jaunty swinger marked by a vibrant, beautifully constructed guitar solo. *Let's Misbehave* (*Paris*, 1928) is playful, bouncy and teasingly appropriate for the subject matter of the lyrics. Infectious ascending chord patterns provide the setting for the nicely syncopated romp, *It's De-Lovely* (*Red Hot And Blue*, 1936) with a beautifully integrated guitar/bass, guitar/piano, and piano/bass soli section. All five of these pieces open with a vocal intro in *rubato* time, providing terrific launching pads for the solid swing to follow.

A couple of unusual rhythmic structures are used as well. *Let's Do It* (also from *Paris*) is in a relaxed march groove, built on propulsive chords. The anthem-ish *I Happen To Like New York* (*The New Yorkers*, 1930) is a dramatic rendition stoked by stark piano chord clusters and dark bass.

The only song not from a Broadway show – *Miss Otis Regrets* – is a deeply touching ballad, featuring a most interesting contrast of cascading guitar lines and a doo-wop piano style.

This brilliant album concludes with the third item from *Anything Goes*, *You're The Top*, with a celebratory arrangement that ends the proceedings on a most upbeat note.

After performing in prominent venues and halls in and around New York City for the past 25 years, this long overdue album is a milestone in Perry Beekman's long and accomplished career.

For more information, visit www.perrybeekman.com

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