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The Nature of Love

Whitney James | Damsely Productions/Stir Stick Music

By [Raul d'Gama Rose](#)

It is more than likely that Whitney James was born to sing, proving once again the Latin adage (relating, albeit to poetry), that *poeta nascitur non fit*. And it was probably only a matter of time before she was discovered. Happily there was not that long a wait, for here, on *The Nature of Love*, is the proverbial "perfect debut" from a courageous young lady. Not only does James pick and successfully tackle a challenging repertoire, but she handles that elemental surge that sends feelings of love coursing through the veins with such depth that she owns the emotion completely.



It is one thing for an artist to *feel* love and quite another to be able to express it romantically. Whitney James is able to do so because she is pitch-perfect and can discern the nuanced gushes of the emotion, translating them into phrases and lines that she swishes and thrusts upon the ear with aplomb. Or she might let her voice dally and hang onto a note, bending its tone to reflect subtle changes in color as she lets it pirouette in quarter tones, turning shades from shy to bold. The result is always imaginative and electric.

The other amazing adventure that unfolds on this album is how James plays a character in love with the other musicians. With trumpeter/flugelhornist [Ingrid Jensen](#), she goes from love-struck to lovelorn on "Tenderly." She translates bitterness to cool, reminiscing with bassist [Matt Clohesy](#) and drummer Jon Wikan on the [Benny Golson/Leonard Feather](#) classic "Whisper Not." But it is on "A Timeless Place (The Peacocks)," a chart immortalized by the legendary [Norma Winstone](#), that James proves that she is a vocal genius as she navigates the myriad colors and hues of the song, from its earthy contralto beginning to the celestial soprano heights that the song demands, seducing Jensen's horn as she soars away. In the crescendo of the song, James makes fantasy reality and reality as elusive as ever as she unwinds the song to rest in the end.

She is shy and enticing on "Long Ago and Far Away," playing an electrifying lover who cavorts in an interminable dance of love with pianist Joshua Wolff. The exacting poetry of [Abbey Lincoln's](#) "My Love Is You" tumbles down, changing color from deep violet to blushing wine pink. Lincoln's definitive rendition is expertly handled again by James, who shakes down the emotions of the song with bassist Clohesy, at times recalling the deep sonority of Lincoln herself. And so on, as the endless, prismatic nature of love is explored in all its glory by a singer mature beyond her years.

James makes wonderful things happen as she explores, with warmth and wonder, both the quiet and the wild side of the human voice, an instrument that--at her command--knows no bounds.

Track Listing: Tenderly; Whisper Not; A Timeless Place (The Peacocks); Long Ago and Far Away; My Love Is You; The Very Thought of You; How Deep Is the Ocean; Be Anything; In April.

Personnel: Whitney James: vocals; Ingrid Jensen: trumpet, flugelhorn (1-3, 6, 7); Joshua Wolff: piano; Matt Clohesy: bass (1-7, 9); Jon Wikan: drums, percussion (1-7, 9).

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