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Vocalist Whitney James Celebrates Release of Stunning Debut CD “The Nature of Love” In Concert 2/4

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by [James](#).

VOCALIST WHITNEY JAMES CELEBRATES RELEASE OF STUNNING DEBUT CD “THE NATURE OF LOVE” IN CONCERT, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4 in SF

“Whitney James ain’t your typically thin-voiced, self-obsessed pseudo-diva. She’s got a spine-tingling presence” – James Kirchmer, The Stranger

“A startlingly impressive and mature debut CD.” – Philip Booth, St. Petersburg Times

Join world-class vocalist Whitney James as she celebrates the release of her debut CD “The Nature of Love” in concert at 9:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 4 at Coda Jazz Supper Club, 1710 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA. Joining James are guitarist Terrence Brewer (winner SF Weekly Music Award, Best Jazz Artist), others TBA. Tickets are \$7. Call 415-551-CODA (2632) or log on to: http://codalive.com/february_calendar_2010.htm

James takes her rightful place among today’s great jazz singers with this stunning debut album released January 19 on Stir Stick Music. The CD features her working rhythm section – pianist Joshua Wolff, bassist Matt Clohesy and drummer Jon Wikan, along with special guest trumpeter Ingrid Jensen. James blends a singer’s sensitivity to lyrics with an instrumentalist’s command of phrasing, melody, and timbre. The album’s ambitious program of material includes classics from the Great

American Songbook such as Jerome Kern and Ira Gershwin's "Long Ago and Far Away" and Irving Berlin's "How Deep Is the Ocean," as well as challenging jazz tunes such as Benny Golson's "Whisper Not" and Jimmy Rowles's "The Peacocks."

James doesn't just sing a tune-she creatively engages it. Every time she approaches a melody and a lyric, she finds a new way to phrase them, shape them, highlight a word or a few notes that shade the meaning and make the music richer. Her sense of time and pacing make her a consummate musician's singer-she knows how to work with a band, instead of asking it to merely back her. Her supple alto voice wraps itself around a song like a sheer silk scarf. She sings with a bright clarity of tone, yet she colors her sound with earthy inflections, subtle squeezed notes, dark growls, and notes of soaring purity.

Her polished musicianship helps her interpret the best of American popular music as well as challenging originals of jazz composers rarely attempted by singers. The upper edge of her voice gently caresses "Tenderly," highlighting the song's romantic glow, then she matches trumpeter Jensen tone for tone with an instrumentalist's full sound. She subjects "Long Ago and Far Away" to playful transformations, making the song her own without ever obscuring the composers' original intent. She negotiates the transitions between Latin and swing beats on "How Deep Is the Ocean" with elegance, phrasing behind the beat at times to create an exquisite tension. And she remains unfazed by the tricky melody of "The Peacocks," making the composition's daunting contours sound graceful and natural.

Her band mates are sensitive accompanists with strong voices of their own. In a duo version of "Be Anything," Wolff, who has also worked with singers Jay Clayton and Mark Murphy, weaves lovely countermelodies and rich harmonies around James' sincere reading of the song. He's alert to every twist and variation that James makes to "Long Ago and Far Away," then swings hard in a lyrical, incisive solo of his own. Bassist Clohesy, who has recorded with Seamus Blake, Pete McCann and Geoffrey Keezer, among others, is a versatile accompanist and soloist. His time is impeccable and his note choice adds depth to the ensemble. His solo on Abbey Lincoln's "My Love Is You" is a beautifully constructed statement, coherent and moving. Wikan has played with the Maria Schneider Orchestra, Jensen, and shared rhythm duties with Clohesy in the bands of Torben Waldorff and Keezer. His attention to dynamics and space and his crisp time-keeping make him a perfect drummer for vocalists, but he can power a band as well, as he does on the hard driving "Whisper Not." Jensen is featured with the Schneider Orchestra and has performed and recorded as a leader and with Jeff 'Tain' Watts, Dr. Lonnie Smith, Marc Copland, Gary Bartz, Chris Connor, and many others. Her warm tone blends beautifully with James on "Tenderly" and "Whisper Not." A lyrical player who is nevertheless full of surprises, she crafts an exciting solo on "Whisper Not" and a poignant ballad performance on "The Very Thought of You."

It's rare that a performer emerges fully formed on their first album. But Whitney James has the musicianship and deep emotional power of a mature artist.

Music has been a part of Whitney James' life since she was a little girl growing up in San Francisco. She began dance lessons at the age of 5, but it was winning the lead role in a musical, at age 10, that set her on the path that eventually led to her debut CD. She continued to study singing and dance as a teenager. At age 22, her interest in jazz singing led her to Cornish College of The Arts in Seattle, where she studied with Jay Clayton and earned a B.A. in Music with a focus on vocal performance. After graduating from Cornish, Whitney remained in on the West coast, working with her trio Vocal Flight, which won a DownBeat Music award, toured France, and played with the incomparable Betty Carter. She has also formed a neo-jazz soul band that toured the Northwest to rave reviews. In 2006, Whitney moved to the East Coast, splitting her time between New York City and Florida. In New York, she reunited with two of her favorite musicians from her years in Seattle -pianist Joshua Wolff

and drummer Jon Wikan – to begin work on her debut CD. “I want to make good music, keep singing and developing my craft and musical language,” Whitney says. “Anything can happen but I am hoping folks like the record and connect with my voice and the music.”

www.whitneyjames.com

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