



In **ALONE TOGETHER**, her eleventh album, the briskly rhythmic swing of Carol's piano playing, the warm, embracing sound of her voice, combined with her irresistible way with a lyric, brightly illuminate her rising ascendancy to the upper levels of the contemporary jazz vocal world.

All of the qualities mentioned above – her piano playing, singing, musical story telling – are fully present in Carol's art. And each plays a significant role. Listening, for example, to the far-ranging styles of the individual songs in **ALONE TOGETHER**, one cannot fail to be impressed by her vocals, with their enchanting interpretive skills, as they bring lyrics vividly to life. Whether Carol is singing intimate ballads such as **IT MIGHT AS WELL BE SPRING**, **IF THE MOON TURNS TO GREEN**, or **I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT YOU**, the deeply grooving **THE BLUES ARE OUT OF TOWN**, or the bebop vocalese of the Charlie Parker solo she scats on **DISAPPOINTED**, her captivating phrasing expresses the essence of the inner story in every song.

Add to that the significance of Carol's piano playing, backed by an assemblage of world class players that include trumpeter Wallace Roney, guitarist Jay Azzolina, bassist Rufus Reid and drummer Lewis Nash. Together, Carol and her musicians interact with the intuitive togetherness of jazz vocalizing at its finest.

All of which places her among an elite number of singer/pianists — in both the past and the present — who have defined themselves, not only as singers, but as jazz pianists, as well. Think Nina Simone, Mary Lou Williams, Shirley Horn, Eliane Elias and Diana Krall.

That's a list that includes Carol, as well. Canadian-born, her musical skills have been acknowledged in her home country with six Juno (Canadian Grammy) Awards and a National Jazz Award. Her 2009 recording, **I LIKE MEN! - REFLECTIONS OF MISS PEGGY LEE**, was voted Top Five Albums of the Year (all genres) in USA Today. Carol was flattered to learn recently that she was "one of Oscar Peterson's favorite singers" according to his wife, Kelly Peterson.

The only thing missing from her many accomplishments — so far, at least — is a Grammy nomination. An absence which may trace to the fact that her career, which reaches back to the mid-nineties, hasn't always thoroughly emphasized her extraordinary abilities as a piano-playing singer. Most of her album covers, in fact, have featured appealing images of her blond beauty, without including a piano anywhere nearby.

Not so with **ALONE TOGETHER**, which displays a set of images illustrating the intimate linkage between Carol and her piano — a linkage which is also showcased in every track on the album. Notice, for example, the way she locks her improvised vocal lines with piano block harmonies on tunes such as **DAY BY DAY** and the title track — an inventive technique that is very much her own.

Perhaps understandably, Carol describes **ALONE TOGETHER** as, "my truest to the jazz form to date." And she is correct in expressing her pride in the album's jazz riches — especially the hard swinging improvisational aspects of her too often overlooked piano playing, as she leads her stellar band into one body-moving groove after another.

Jazz singer/pianist
Carol Welsman's new CD,
ALONE TOGETHER,
a memorable collection of
classic and contemporary
songs, affirms the brilliant
blend of jazz skills at the heart
of her musical artistry

BY DON HECKMAN
INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF MUSIC