

Joan Bow-Miller | *Variations*

JBM Music

Joan Bow-Miller has a great voice, well trained from her early roots singing gospel in the choir and paying her dues with soul, R&B, blues and jazz. She brings a taste of all these musical genres to her new CD *Variations*. The liner notes indicate that the title *Variations* refers to the different stages Bow-Miller has gone through in her life. She has managed to add various styles of music to the CD, rather than blending her musical influences and creating her own style. When singing the standards her influences are front and centre. Her emotions, energy and spirit make listening to her smooth, silky voice a pleasurable experience.

The first track on the CD, “Ain’t No Shame”, has a great jazzy feel, opening with a tenor saxophone (smooth jazz) intro that blends with Bow-Miller’s voice, as smooth as silk. Bow-Miller opens the door to this song in style. Her voice is deep and polished; she puts out serious emotion in this song and draws the listener in.

“Grandma’s Hands” a classic by Bill Withers is performed up-tempo with the band playing some nice back up to Bow-Miller’s vocal interpretation. Scott Barnhill on Tenor Sax lets loose with some good fills. Don E. Beck plays Hammond B3 organ, a nice touch, and mixed just right to support Bow-Miller’s singing.

The Sam Cooke song “Bring It On Home To Me” is a tune that just flies, with Bow-Miller driving the band hard and setting the bar high. Lead guitarist Calvin Keyes pulls off some nice licks. The rhythm section is cookin’, led by Don E. Beck on B3 organ with some thunderous chords.

“Fine & Mellow,” is classic Billie Holiday performed wonderfully, Bow-Miller style. It’s a 12 bar blues with nice boogie-woogie piano. All the players on this piece have a great feel for the music. A song with a similar feel is “Say You’ll Be Mine” with words by Janet Cole-Valdez and music by Mel Nelson. It’s a slow blues with some stirring vocal lines, backed up by Barnhill on tenor sax. In it, Bow-Miller uses her vocal phrasing to sound similar to a horn. A class act and a beautiful talent, some very nice singing and playing on this project.

Joan Bow-Miller (lead vocal)
Don E. Beck, David Warren, Pamela Arthur (keyboards)
Ron E. Beck, Jimmie Adams III (drums), Jeff Hanson (percussion)
Mel Nelson (guitar), Calvin Keyes (lead guitar), Jay Goudeau (bass)
Scott Barnhill (tenor saxophone), Cheryl Lee, Willie Geter, Daryl Rowe, Hazelette Robinson, Scott Hayes, Crystal Leach (background vocal)

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