



LAUREN KINHAN

The first thing you notice is her voice, and then her savvy choices. Lauren Kinhan possesses a rare and beautiful instrument, tough and tender, clear and fine-grained in every register, whether she's dipping down into husky chest tones or ascending into silvery head tones. With her glorious sound, she could sing anything and make it a memorable listening experience.

Whether on her own highly-acclaimed albums, as a 26-year member of the beloved vocal group **New York Voices**, or as co-founder of two diverse and inventive supergroups, **Moss** and **JaLaLa**, singer and composer Lauren has always forged her own path as a performer, composer and improviser. With her latest, ***A Sleepin' Bee*** on her own *Dotted i Records*, Kinhan once again steers herself in unexpected directions that is at once the first all-standards collection of her career, a loving tribute to legendary vocalist Nancy Wilson, and unmistakably a Lauren Kinhan album – with all the unique perspective and idiosyncratic personality that has come to imply. *Downbeat Magazine* agreed, giving it 4 1/2 Stars in it's February 2018 issue!

If the sudden appearance of an album's worth of standards in a catalogue dominated by original songs comes as a surprise, the process of its creation is just as atypical. While Kinhan spent much of 2016 conceiving, rehearsing and workshopping the project, the circumstances of the recording arose suddenly through the auspices of her alma mater, Berklee College of Music. The session was an educational opportunity as well as a record date, providing a small group of Berklee students the invaluable privilege of observing and engaging in a recording session at the highest level.

First and foremost, though, ***A Sleepin' Bee*** is a celebration of Nancy Wilson on the occasion of the genre-hopping singer's 80th birthday. The recent loss of Wilson in 2018 makes this project that much more of a poignant homage. While Kinhan shares Nancy's penchant for blurring stylistic boundaries, her choice of material focuses on her early jazz albums, particularly the collaborations with Cannonball Adderley and George Shearing. Those recordings proved to be a jumping-off point for Kinhan, who utterly transforms these classic and obscure numbers with the help of pianist/creative partner Andy Ezrin and veteran producer Elliot Scheiner as well as a stellar band featuring bassist Matt Penman, drummer Jared Schonig and special guest trumpeter Ingrid

Jensen. *“Every single song in this collection hits a sweet spot of a different sort, but the most pleasing aspect of the recording is how it uncovers the stripped-down, soulful side of Kinhan’s voice,”* All About Jazz.

Her decided journey with **New York Voices** has run at the forefront of her career since 1992, recording a full color catalogue of works, logging millions of miles, and creating an educational division that is in high demand across the globe. They celebrated their 30th Anniversary in high style releasing a stunning collaboration with the **Bob Mintzer Big Band** entitled *Meeting of Minds* for the MCG Label in 2018. In the pipeline is another incredible pairing with **Ivan Lins** and the **Danish Radio Big Band** that features Ivan’s songbook in a modern soundscape (still looking for it’s home). And ready for release in the fall of 2019 is the much anticipated latest NYV studio album, *Reminiscing in Tempo* on Origin Records. They dedicate their energies paying homage to compositions by Dave Brubeck, Chick Corea, Duke Ellington, Ivan Lins, Fred Hersch and the Beatles and sprinkle in a cappella treatments to a pair of Cuban Dances and a few originals by the members. It’s a typical bouquet from the group, showing their vast interest in coloring across genres and using the voice liberally.

With three brilliant albums of her own songs under her belt, not to mention her game-changing work with three distinctive vocal groups and wide-ranging collaborations with singular artists from **Ornette Coleman** to **Bobby McFerrin**, Kinhan always delivers a 360 degree view of her creative world. *Circle in a Square* (Dotted i Records), Kinhan’s 2014 release puts on high display her vivid identity as a songwriter with a gift for capturing the emotional currents of everyday life. Rooted in jazz’s improvisational imperative, she knows that you best celebrate the music by remaking it in your own image. Kinhan turns each piece into a self-contained emotional narrative driven by her unerring musical taste. Successfully funded by her Kickstarter campaign, she launched herself into the modern day business of music DIY style. *Jazz Journal* called it a *“Tour de Force”* and *Jazz Times’* Christopher Loudon said *“Kinhan has never shone brighter.”*

Taking time to start a family in the midst of her touring life posed the very questions she began to answer on her sophomore solo outing, **Avalon**. Basic recording began in 2001 upon discovering she was pregnant, a strategic place marker meant to help her find her way back to finishing the work once the life of parenthood took over. Over the next 8 years, Lauren chipped away on the writing and recording while collaborating with longtime bandmate and producer Ben Wittman. *“Sweet surprises lurk around every corner, says Loudon of Jazz Times, shaping a pastiche that is hip, intelligent and vibrant.”* New York City all stars studded the songs throughout including Donny McAslin, Joel Frahm, and Romero Lubambo. And the love song she wrote to her daughter Ella, *“Here is My Avalon,”* enjoyed her 5 year old cameo vocal appearance. Released on EOne Records in 2010, its a distinct piece in the puzzle of understanding Lauren’s mosaic.

Perhaps the making of **Avalon** took so long because in addition to parenthood, two other super groups came into her orbit. In 2006, the notion of a musical collective that would meet, eat and play around with musical ideas gave birth to the group **Moss**.

Luciana Souza and **Peter Eldridge** came up with the idea while on the NYC transit and put together their dream group of artists that they would most like to break bread with. They phoned **Theo Bleckmann**, **Kate McGarry** and Kinhan to round out the quintet. At Luciana's wedding they attended in 2007, the record deal was cemented on the dance floor and soon **Moss** was in production. The vocal vision was a looser script on arranging, modern sweeps with lots of Theo's distinct ambient looping and bravado. Produced by Ben Wittman and released on *Sunnyside Records* in 2008 to rave reviews, *Downbeat Magazine* included it in their "Best of the 2000s" issue.

A phone call in 2008 from *The Manhattan Transfer* legend **Janis Siegel** brought another vocal alliance to fruition. Using a production opportunity already in the pipeline for Janis to produce the songs of Johnny Mercer, this became the vehicle to launch **JaLaLa** into the mainstream of women vocal trios like *The Boswells*. Made up of Janis, Laurel Masse' (the original soprano in TMT) and Lauren, "**That Old Mercer Magic**" came out on Dare Records in 2009. Touring followed and talks of a reunion are in the works.

Cracking open her solo persona happened one summer night in 1999 at New York's singer/songwriter room, The Bitter End, where she was holding forth on her set of originals with her commanding band complete with three backing singers. In attendance were **Ornette Coleman** whom she recently finished touring with and legendary music producer **Phil Ramone**. Signing her on the spot to his N2K Records, Ramone asked her to change nothing and the record was ready for the studio immediately. **Hardly Blinking** (2000) demonstrates beautifully her rich melodic diversity that stretches across her limber voice and eclectic depth of song mining. Phil called her "*a true songstress, like Phoebe Snow.*"

From the time Kinhan joined New York Voices, the world of education has played a huge role in her creative life and career. NYV's enormous reputation and demand as educators grew out of their realization that playing jazz clubs would not sustain a five headed artist for long. Luckily the vocal jazz community in high schools and universities found a need for visiting artists to provide concerts and workshops, packages that served both education and that could provide a sustainable livelihood for the group. And so learning to disseminate and share their process began and 31 years later they have a fully realized educational division to their business. They launched their **New York Voices Vocal Jazz Camp** in 2008 at Bowling Green State University. It's a six day immersion into the world of vocal jazz where all the campers are assigned to a vocal jazz choir directed by one of the members of NYV and they program the rest of their day with electives and enjoy performances every night. It moved to the group's alma mater Ithaca College in 2016 and in 2019 it begins a partnership with Western Michigan University, home of the amazing vocal jazz ensemble Gold Company.

Through these years, Kinhan has found her own voice in the arena of education. She is an in-demand clinician, conductor, jurist, private voice teacher/coach and offers Master Classes all over the world. In 2015 she was asked to join the adjunct faculty at Long Island University at Post offering Applied Jazz Voice lessons. Mining the American

Songbook, pop tunes and/or originals, Lauren guides her students in infusing their own choices and ideas into the repertoire through listening, transcribing and finally deriving arrangements that are personal and more deeply refined. In the fall of 2018, Lauren partnered with Janis Siegel in launching the first Contemporary and Jazz Ensemble at New York University. A coveted by-audition class, they play with all kinds of repertoire and push the predominantly classical and musical theater students into new ways of thinking and using the voice, ultimately preparing them to be more diverse as they enter the competitive work force of the arts. In all areas of her teaching she is known for her clear dissemination of ideas both large and small, her devoted work ethic expected of herself and her students, and her kind, nurturing and entertaining style that breaks down barriers and opens new portals of expression from which to thrive. She is most interested in waking the artist in each of her students and helping them find their unique and most authentic voice, creating a map for self realization and demonstrating that that search never ends if you are in it for the long haul.

Another unique facet to her education life is finding herself to be mentoring more and more young women along the road of life, whether it be teaching, coaching, advising or simply listening. Her kind wisdom is frequently sought after and she is exploring ways to organize a Big Sister-like Collective.

Along with her vibrant solo touring schedule, another live production has come her way. In 2018, Charles Carlini asked Lauren and Janis Siegel to start a monthly vocal night. They took the charge seriously and began curating a night of singers that looks like no other night in NYC housed at the Village haunt, The Zinc Bar. **Vocal Mania** is just passing its one year mark and has earned a huge following that have become accustomed to the ever eclectic roster of big names, surprise artists and rich pool of local talent that make up the whole affair. Programming beyond jazz, they include world music, folk, pop, a cappella, vocal looping, you name it. They are interested in celebrating the voice and creating a community. No night is the same and no set is the same. And included in the evening they always feature young artists, whether high school, college or newly emerging, all to help support and mentor the next generation.

Moss is growing again as evidenced by their 2017 residency at Western Michigan University where they merged old and new repertoire and welcomed a new bandmate. A new record is on the horizon with Kate McGarry, Theo Bleckmann, Peter Eldridge, Lauren and newbie, Jo Lawry. Luciana Souza graced the first recording and her participation is always welcome as the wheels of collaboration keep up with everyone's busy careers.

New recordings, new beginnings, never waiting for the phone, Lauren is the epitome of "*make what you want to happen...happen.*" She's always writing, always thinking about the next thing to try, the next song to sing and the next challenge there is to face.

To learn more about Lauren, New York Voices, Moss, JaLaLa and her guest artist works, visit www.laurenkinhan.com