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## **MULTI-FACETED VOCALIST DEB BOWMAN SALUTES DECADES OF GREAT SONGWRITERS ON HER 4<sup>TH</sup> JAZZ ALBUM**

### ***REFLECTION***

Out April 11, 2025 on Mama Bama Records

In the course of her brilliant and varied career as an actress and vocalist, **DEB BOWMAN** has embraced several diverse styles, including jazz, pop, gospel, Broadway and Latin music. She brings elements of all of these styles into her new Mama Bama Records release, **REFLECTION**. Recorded over a two-year period in three different states, the album was originally conceived as a tribute to three contemporary songwriters who passed between 2019 and 2023: Michel Legrand, Burt Bacharach, and Stephen Sondheim. As Bowman states, "After the initial recording sessions, life got in the way, and I was unable to produce the album in a timely matter." In retrospect, the delay may have been fortuitous, for Bowman took the additional time to revise the original selections and eventually expand the album's concept to include a wider range of songs and composers.

Bowman worked closely with her musical director, pianist **DEAN FRANSEN**, to create atmospheric settings which enhanced the song lyrics. They felt free to approach the repertoire with arrangements that are quite different than the status quo. For example, the Latin touch applied to the opening track, Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns" is a far cry from the nearly classical renditions from the original show and subsequent recordings. Fransen had conceived an instrumental version of the song many years earlier, but it wasn't until after Sondheim's passing that he adapted the song for Bowman's voice. The Henry Mancini/Johnny Mercer classic "Moon River" is one of Bowman's favorite songs. While there was some resistance about including this song, Bowman made the case with a thoughtful interpretation that allows each listener to find their own story within Mercer's deliberately vague lyrics.

Bowman cites Judy Garland as one of her favorite vocalists, and recording Garland's signature song "Over the Rainbow" was a long-standing goal. The unique arrangement opens with the sounds of a thunderstorm, the original verse, some abstract instrumental ideas and several spoken aphorisms before segueing into a Latin version of the chorus. The effect of the transition is reminiscent of when Dorothy opens the door of her transported farmhouse into Munchkinland. **BRUCE HARRIS** adds a distinctive muted trumpet solo to the chart. Bowman draws inspiration from another vocal icon, Aretha Franklin, for her rendition of Bacharach's "This Girl's in Love with You." Bowman brings her own version of Franklin's intensity and soulfulness to the proceedings, while Fransen's Hammond organ and the solid underpinning of bassist **JIM DONICA** and drummer **JAKUBU GRIFFIN** provide a background that straddles the worlds of gospel, jazz and pop.

As an experienced storyteller, Bowman recognizes the power of a great lyric. Lorenz Hart's tender yet tortured lyrics to "She Was Too Good to Me" cover a wide range of emotions, and Bowman makes us believe the truth within Hart's words. The performance opens with the rarely heard verse, which reveals a potentially interesting

back story (one which was never explored on Broadway, since the song was cut from its original placement in the 1930 musical "Simple Simon" and never subsequently inserted into any later Rodgers and Hart shows). Fransen's extraordinary accompaniment to Bowman's emotional vocal makes this track one of the album's highlights. "Somewhere That's Green" (from "Little Shop of Horrors") is a complete change of pace as it embraces the naïve but earnest imagery of Howard Ashman's lyrics. The expanded backup group, with clarinetist **KURT BACHER** and guitarist **TOM McCAFFREY**, have a great time with the melody and harmonies composed by Alan Menken.

The song "How Do You Keep the Music Playing" has outlasted its source film, *Best Friends*, primarily due to the strength of Michel Legrand's timeless melody and the tender lyrics of Alan and Marilyn Bergman. Bowman's performance enhances the song with a well-sculpted vocal approach, and the superb arrangement captures the song's alternating moods. "Till There Was You" presents the most elaborate of Fransen's settings, with several varied approaches which are sampled before settling into an elegant tango. Bowman portrays a lovestruck innocent in her delivery of Meredith Willson's vivid imagery. The album delivers a final treat with an elegant piano/vocal duet on the lullaby, "Baby Mine." Bowman and Fransen let the song's simple message speak for itself, proving that the most sensitive interpretations utilize restraint rather than power.

After a long sojourn in New York City, **DEB BOWMAN** relocated to Atlanta, where she performs in a variety of settings. She has appeared in five different productions of *Cabaret* (in both the lead role of Sally Bowles and the supporting part of Fraülein Kost), as well as in *Chicago*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Evita* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. On film, she was part of the cast of Francis Ford Coppola's latest epic *Megalopolis* and in the films *It's Complicated* and *Wall Street 2*. On television, Bowman created the role of Miss Woods in the DC Comics series *Stargirl* and has also appeared in the shows *Ugly Betty* and Steven Spielberg's *Amazing Stories*. Her musical appearances range from performances with the Atlanta Pops Orchestra to intimate cabaret shows. Bowman's discography includes blues, standards and original songs. She has also released a holiday album and hopes to explore her roots in gospel music on her next album. Bowman carries the lessons of her vast musical training to her own practice as a professional voice coach.

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**REFLECTION** will be released on April 11, 2025 on Mama Bama Records and will be available at [www.debbowman.com/merch](http://www.debbowman.com/merch) and on all streaming platforms.

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