

JANICE HARRINGTON
80 Years of International Friendship
Hip & Happy

With special roots in Norway

This American blues, jazz, funk, soul and gospel singer comes from Cleveland, Ohio. She celebrates her 80th anniversary from her current residence in Germany by collecting all her recordings from the 80s to the present day. She had an exciting period for us when she lived in Oslo in the early 80s. She stayed on after her disco band stopped by Oslo on a trip from the USA. Here she made her soul/gospel/r&b/blues debut album, "Rockin' The Blues" with a young Knut Reiersrud and many more of our leading musicians backing her.

And just imagine, this lady traveled to the war in Vietnam in the 60s, among other things, to entertain the American soldiers! She has been on stage with legends such as Frank Sinatra, Nat Adderley, Sammy Davis Jr, Lionel Hampton,. She came to Norway where she started writing songs in 1981 and got a record contract with CBS. Shortly after the debut album was released in 1982, she was able to be a warm-up artist for Joan Armatrading in Drammenshallen. The following year she also warmed up for Jose Feliciano. A little later in the 80s, after leaving Norway, she had a stop in Denmark where she also made recordings. When she was in Norway, she also wrote her own musicals, one of them together with Karin Krog and the English jazz saxophonist Jon Surman, "Streets of Harlem" in 1982 and "Girl Talk" the following year. On her aforementioned debut album, Knut Reiersrud was on guitar, jazz guitar legend Nipe Nyren, bass legend Sveinung Hovensjø, Jens Vendelboe on trombone, Odd Riisnes (Knut's brother) on saxophone and more. An all-star team of Norwegian musicians called the Tor Welo Band by Jan, as he was the bandleader behind the keys. He is also known from Vazelina Bilopphøggers, and wrote most of the songs together with Jan. Jens Vendelboe also contributed as a songwriter on the debut, and Nipe Nyren helped write a song. Five of the songs from this album are included here at the 80th anniversary celebration. The best thing about this CD celebration, I think, and which draws weak links to Norwegian blues and bands like the Four Roosters.

The second album that was recorded in Norway, "Soularium", had Helge Iberg as band leader. Here, bass legend Sveinung Hovensjø actually plays guitars, while Ole Marius Melhus takes care of the bass. Jazz drummer Finn Sletten is on board, Hege Schøyen sings together with Håkon Iversen and Kari Gjærum, and the large brass line-up with Sigurd Køhn (sax), Torbjørn Sunde (trombone) and Jens Petter Antonsen (trumpet) elevates this funk/soul and r&b -album a little away from the blues of the debut. There are four songs from this album on this 80s celebration.

You can feel the vibes from the development within her music genre in Norway at this time with bands like Chipahua. During the time she lived in Norway, she gave us a lot of input. Her "black" music references were quite new for Norwegian bands and musicians in the early 80s.

You will find four recordings from her stay in Denmark in the late 80s. You will also find a big band recording of Ray Charles, "Hallelujah I love her so", from Austria in 1994, and two recordings from Germany this year. The band recording "Old age" opens the ball like a Koko Taylor in fine form, and the classic "What a wonderful world" in a simple trio format at the very end is a fine ending for an 80-year-old who has had a varied but fine career.

This is honestly not a must-have album. The recordings are partly stylistically outdated, but the lady sings fantastically, the recordings have very special roots to Norway and the environments around Hot House and Club 7 in Oslo in the early 80s, and I feel that the music of the past grows on me when I play this CD celebration several times. So yes, this is soul, r&b, blues, big band, funk, the heart of black America firmly planted in the ground in Oslo at a time when many saw black music as something foreign and new.

We know something different today. Norwegian bands and artists are at the very top of these musical trends today, and perhaps the immigration of this great Janice (Jan) Harrington is one of the reasons for that. Happy birthday, you really can sing!

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