

Forbes

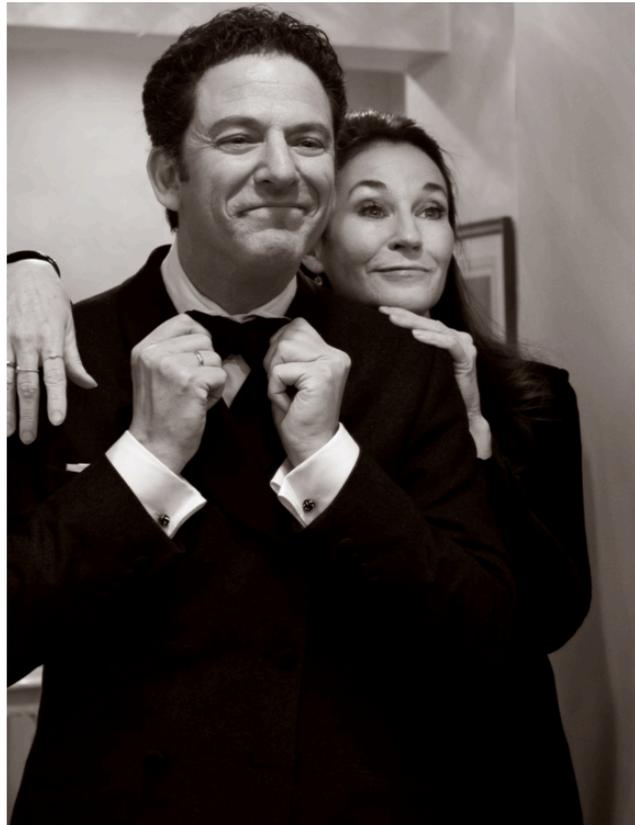
November 3, 2015

Paul McCartney Inspires New Album--And Related Cabaret Act--With His Lesser-Known Songs

The newest album of guitarist and singer John Pizzarelli came about at the suggestion of none other than former Beatle [Paul McCartney](#).

Midnight McCartney—which was released in September and some of whose numbers will be performed in [a new cabaret act](#), by Pizzarelli and his wife, the singer Jessica Molaskey, debuting tonight at New York's Café Carlyle—features McCartney's lesser-known songs.

In May 2014, McCartney wrote to Pizzarelli—who had made a CD in 1996 called *John Pizzarelli Meets the Beatles*, and later played guitar on McCartney's *Kisses on the Bottom* album and backed him on several live performances, including the Grammy Awards—to tell him, “I got an idea in my head. It might be interesting for you to do a few of my songs that are lesser-known than some of the others. I realize this may be a little immodest, if not pushy. I imagine the songs would include post-Beatles melodies of mine like ‘Love in the Open Air,’ ‘Junk,’ ‘Warm and Beautiful,’ and, possibly, ‘My Valentine.’”



John Pizzarelli and his wife, Jessica Molaskey, are performing in a new cabaret act at the Café Carlyle in New York featuring songs by Paul McCartney from their latest album, "Midnight McCartney."

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/janelevere/2015/11/03/paul-mccartney-inspires-new-album-and-related-cabaret-act-with-his-lesser-known-songs/2/>

Forbes

November 3, 2015

Concluding his letter to Pizzarelli, McCartney wrote, “The attraction for me is lesser-known tunes done in a mellow jazz style, and, if it gets some traction, maybe the album could be titled ‘Midnight McCartney.’ As I said, this may tickle your fancy, or you may decide these are the ramblings of a deranged composer with too much time on his hands.”

Inspired by McCartney’s suggestion, Pizzarelli, Molaskey (who eventually co-produced the CD) and pianist Larry Goldings dug through McCartney’s albums from the past 50-odd years to identify songs that could be reharmonized and adapted for Pizzarelli’s style.

“When I did the Beatles record in 1996, I found you can really reharmonize that stuff, find nice harmonies and not get too crazy. That’s the challenge and the fun of the whole thing,” Pizzarelli said.

“It’s amazing what the power of McCartney means to so many people,” he added. “Everyone elevates their game. Not that they wouldn’t play their best normally, but there was this special thing. You tell a Paul McCartney story to the string section before a take, and they’re saying, ‘Let’s make sure we get this right.’ Michael McDonald, my guys, the Brazilians – the second they hear ‘Paul McCartney,’ they get really, really excited.”

Although the Beatles broke up when Pizzarelli was nine years old, his fascination with their albums continued, and he played songs the group covered in his own rock band in New York. He also kept up with McCartney’s work

“I always loved finding his new records and hearing what he was up to,” he said. “When (*Midnight McCartney*) came along, I had a lot of fun revisiting things like ‘Venus and [Mars](#).’”

Beside Molaskey, who provides background vocals, other members of Pizzarelli’s family performing on the new CD are his father, the guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli, and his brother, Martin, a bassist. His teenage daughter, Madeline, even transcribed the song “Warm and Beautiful” for her father to sing in a different key.

The format of the new album is similar to others of Pizzarelli, some of which have been devoted to a single artist, like Duke Ellington and Frank Sinatra, or a single musical style, like bossa nova.

Pizzarelli and Molaskey’s new program at the Café Carlyle will feature songs written after the early 1960’s by a wide variety of songwriters, including Joni Mitchell, Stephen Sondheim, Paul Simon, John Kander and Billy Joel, as well as McCartney. “I thought it

Forbes

November 3, 2015

was time to focus on music formed” during that period, Pizzarelli said, adding, “the great American songbook is not finite.”

“Some songs by Billy Joel and Joni Mitchell stand the test of time,” said Molaskey.