



## **SAMARA JOY**

With a voice as smooth as velvet, SAMARA JOY's star seems to rise with each performance. Following her winning the 2019 Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition, she is currently recording her debut recording, which will feature Samara backed by the Pasquale Grasso Trio.

This rising star still resides in the place of her birth, the Castle Hill section of the Bronx, New York. Growing up, music was a pervasive presence, due to the inspiration of her paternal grandparents, Elder Goldwire and Ruth McLendon, who led the well-known Philadelphia-based gospel group, The Savettes. Her father toured with the renowned Gospel artist Andrae Crouch, and her home was filled with the sounds of not only her father's songs and songwriting process, but the inspiration of many Gospel and R&B artists, including Stevie Wonder, Lalah Hathaway, George Duke, Musiq Soulchild, Kim Burrell, Commissioned, and many others.

"Although I didn't grow up singing in church," explains Samara, "I constantly heard my family singing inspirational music together, which instilled in me an appreciation for my musical lineage. My earliest memory of performing is singing a Jordin Sparks song for my fifth grade graduation. Then, through musicals in middle school, I loved exploring the range of my voice and applying the different colors to fit the characters I played. Finally, during high school, I joined the choir at my church, eventually becoming a worship leader, singing three services a week for nearly two years."

Samara's first exposure to jazz was while attending Fordham High School for the Arts, where she performed regularly with the jazz band, eventually winning Best Vocalist at JALC's Essentially Ellington competition. However, jazz wasn't really her focus until the time came to choose a college. Wanting to attend a state school close to home, she picked SUNY Purchase, gaining acceptance into their acclaimed jazz program, with a faculty that includes many jazz masters (including Pasquale Grasso and drummer Kenny Washington, who both appear on her debut recording.)

"My friends were all into jazz and started sharing their favorite recordings with me to check out. The turning point was when I heard both Sarah Vaughan's version of 'Lover Man' and Tadd Dameron's recordings featuring trumpeter Fats Navarro. I was hooked."

From this point, she began to pursue her jazz studies with an intense passion, eventually being named the Ella Fitzgerald Scholar and entering and winning the Sarah Vaughan International Jazz Vocal Competition.

Not yet 21 years old, Samara has already performed in many of the great jazz venues in NYC, including Dizzy's Club Coca Cola, The Blue Note, and Mezzrow, in addition to working with jazz greats such as Christian McBride, Pasquale Grasso, Jon Faddis, Kirk Lightsey, Cyrus Chestnut, and NEA Jazz Master Dr. Barry Harris.

As she begins work on her debut recording (to be released in the spring of 2021), Samara Joy looks forward to sharing her passionate love for jazz as a unifying force and as a catalyst for change in the years to come.

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