

## QUOTES/ REVIEWS

### EVERYBODY LOVES SOMEBODY album:

*With a vast musical education and experience behind her, Monique diMattina has reached that hallowed ground where influences and inspirations coalesce to produce a unique voice. On this new album, jazz sensibilities and classic songwriting skills blend to produce something reminiscent of the jazzier shadows of Rickie Lee Jones or Joni Mitchell. That is to say, some of the approaches, and aesthetics draw from jazz, but first and foremost it's about the singer and her songs (although diMattina is certainly no slouch on the piano, check out second song 'Baby Wont You Cook For Me' for irrefutable proof).*

*The songs in question here interweave original compositions with those of others diMattina admires. Her take on Dylans 'All I Really Want To Do' is almost unrecognisable whilst, in contrast Piaf's 'La Vie En Rose' is a straighter tribute. Blondies' 'One Way or Another' is dressed in boisterous R&B garb and 'I'm Through With Love' is a gently rolling triumph.*

Martin Jones, RHYTHMS magazine 2016

*"Monique's witty songs are on a par with the Broadway songsmiths of the 1930s ..how refreshing to hear her intelligence bringing popular music and jazz together again"*

Lucky Oceans Daily Planet

*"An astonishing player, songwriter and singer" - Music Roots & Style*

*"The tones and the groove are as laid-back as they are honey quilted" - Sydney Morning Herald (\*\*\*\*)*

### NOLA'S ARK / SUN SIGNS album:

#### **INSIDE STORY mag: Andrew Ford is a fan. But of whom, exactly?**

**Bold and inventive: jazz singer, composer and pianist Monique diMattina.**

*I DON'T get out as much as I might. I live in the country with a toddler and even getting to my own concerts is sometimes tricky. In particular, Melbourne is a long way away. These are among my excuses for not really knowing who Monique diMattina was or what she actually did.*

*My experience of diMattina was based entirely on her album Sun Signs [1], which appeared in late 2011. Having never heard of her, I assumed this was her first CD. And I really liked it. Sun Signs was, for the most part, an album of thoughtful, gentle, delicate*

*solo piano music, composed and played by diMattina. It was on the JazzHead label and clearly some of it was jazz, but the music was anything but obvious. If I tell you that on the first track, "Sun," the pianist edges closer and closer to the "Nimrod" theme from Elgar's Enigma Variations before finally coming right out and quoting it, you will begin to see what I mean. Elgar and jazz piano are not natural bedfellows.*

*So I played the CD on the radio, I gave it as a present to friends, and finally I lent my copy to someone whose identity now eludes me (if you're reading this and you are that person, you know what to do). The point is, I was a fan. But of what, exactly? And of whom?*

*When, a few weeks ago, a new album by diMattina appeared, I leapt upon it. Into the CD player it went and, blow me down, she was singing. Quite well. With a band. In New Orleans. How wonderful, I thought – still clinging to my belief that diMattina was some wistful wood nymph of refined jazz sensibility – she's gone and released a breakout album!*

*But the truth – and please refer to paragraph one again before you condemn me – is that Sun Signs was not diMattina's first album. It was not even her third. It was her seventh. And it, rather than this delightful stomp through New Orleans jazz, was more like her breakout moment. She does not generally muck about with Elgar. In fact she has long been a singer, and a songwriter to boot, as listeners to Melbourne's community radio station 3RRR know well.*

*Her regular slot on 3RRR is called "Shaken Not Rehearsed" [2] and during it listeners will phone in with ideas for songs. DiMattina takes away the most likely idea and, within the hour, turns it into a new song, which she then performs on air. The songs are generally inspired by events, large and small, in the listeners' own lives, and so the topics will range from complaints about work (in fact, trench digging) getting in the way of sex, to a broken love affair, to a child's fantasy about a cat terrorising her neighbourhood. These are all real examples, respectively entitled "Dig a Hole," "No More Coffee" and "Black Cat," and as it happens they are all on the new album. It's called Nola's Ark [3] (for those of you who don't watch Treme, NOLA is New Orleans, Louisiana), and most of the songs are diMattina originals, the bulk of them products of her 3RRR slot. That's some journey, when you think of it: from a listener's phone call with an idea for a song, to a studio in New Orleans with some of that city's top session musicians. In microcosm, indeed, it seems to sum up the very business of creativity. You can start with anything. No idea is too small, even the most unpromising of them can generate a spark and a spark is all you need to begin. Art is not about ideas, it is about what you do with them, how you transform them. In this case, the transformation includes the trumpet of Leroy Jones, who normally works with such luminaries as Harry Connick Jr and Dr John.*

*So what of diMattina? Well she's no wood nymph! Her piano playing is bold and inventive, occasionally boisterous, showing the influence of all manner of New Orleans players. I hear, for example, touches of both Tuts Washington and Huey "Piano" Smith.*

*Her singing voice, meanwhile, is pitched somewhere between Billie Holiday and Rickie Lee Jones, though her phrasing and a certain wryness in the delivery regularly remind me of Blossom Dearie.*

*But the most impressive thing about diMattina – and remember, I will always hear her work filtered through my initial exposure to Sun Signs – is her range. As I've commented before in Inside Story, Australia has an extraordinary oversupply of talent in jazz, particularly among piano players. Still, I can't think of anyone else who would move quite as cheerfully between the styles of music to be found on these two CDs by Monique diMattina.*

Composer Andrew Ford presents The Music Show [4] at 10 am and 10 pm each Saturday on ABC Radio National.

*"Dynamic and utterly divine, Miss Monique is back to showcase her extraordinary musical gift. With influence from the likes of Bjork and Lou Reed, the singer has astounded the likes of former American President Bill Clinton. Five albums down and this marvelous Melbournite has her feet well and truly stuck in Aussie soil, with a Sydney appearance that will showcase hits from her stellar career." - Sydney Livewire,*

#### **SENSES and SUN SIGNS albums:**

*"Lovely, lyrical, spare"*  
Lucky Oceans, ABC Radio National

*"..a touch, tone and sensitivity at the keyboard which can only be found in artists of high calibre. A beautiful listening experience."*  
Dr Tony Gould

*"Cherishing each note she plays and the spaces between them."*  
Doug Spencer - The Weekend Planet - ABC Radio National

*"Calm notes with a sharp intelligence"*  
BBC Radio 4

*"A luscious soundscape - the thinking person's zen escape."*  
Village Voice, NYC

*The danger with solo piano albums is that they can end up sounding the same throughout. diMattina has avoided this pitfall by crafting a suite of pieces that are diverse in tempo, tonality and character. Throughout we are treated to diMattina's exquisite touch and tone. This is not an album for those who seek flamboyant displays*

*of pianistic technique. While there is never any doubt that she possesses considerable chops, the emphasis is on subtlety, grace and nuance. Each delicate phrase is perfectly placed on the rhythmic matrix. While the influences are there for all to see (Corea, Jarrett, Evans and Jamal - Debussy also raises his head, particularly on The Scales and The Twins) diMattina avoids pastiche by bringing something of her own to each performance. She has the knack of creating melodies that seem inevitable, yet turn in surprising directions. It's clear that, whilst she is not ashamed of showing her influences, diMattina is a mature artist who has assimilated the tradition into her unique and singular identity. Sun Signs is a beautiful album. Highly recommended.*

A.Searle, Music Forum: Journal of the Music Council of Australia, winter 2012

### **WELCOME STRANGER album:**

*"Jazz smarts sculpt elegant pop" - ABC Limelight*

*"Sophisticated and playful" – Dave Graney, 3RRR*

*"Blossom Dearie meets Rickie Lee Jones" - Billy Pinell, JB HiFi magazine. \*\*\*\**

*This is the third album for young Melbourne/New York jazz singer Monique diMattina but "Welcome Stranger" – which seems to be named after both the pokies joint on Bourke Street as well as her gladness to return home after long stints away – is a pure Melbourne album in so many ways. The heroine of it is a character named Joan of Burwood in the song of the same name, in which a lost suburban cook grinds away on her pots and her pans, doing work which is not fully explained yet seems to be a kind of angry drudgery ("...all he ever does is take take take/all she ever does is burn the steak..."). diMattina's voice is clear and reasoned; the band are picked from the cream of the local jazz, blues and roots scene. She sings New Orleans stompers as confidently as she sings supple, tiny lullabies; this is an album with room for both and more.*

*I like it. It feels as though it's about us and from the place we live.*

– Chris Johnston, The Age glossy mag Dec 2010

*"From bluesy grooves to the exquisite and hymn-like...her clear, light voice slides easily across each melody with a sweetly seductive feel"*

Jessica Nicholas, The Age

*"Monique diMattina's 'The Livingest Place' is possibly the nicest and slyest Melbourne vs Sydney song ever"*

-ABC RN Daily Planet Doug Spencer

*"diMattina's second feel-good album is upbeat and bluesy..diMattina's seductive skills on keys and Steve Grant's trumpet solos reach new heights. From French bohemian to dedicated blues to sweet lullabies, Welcome Stranger is bound to win you over one way or another."*

Tiffany Bridger, Rave Magazine