

During a 2004 concert at the Steinway-Haus in Düsseldorf, Germany, jazz and blues singer Pamela Rose performed eight songs in a row by women composers. Although she hadn't consciously planned the set that way, it wasn't entirely by happenstance, as the San Francisco vocalist had long held a keen interest in women songwriters, particularly those of the Tin Pan Alley and classic blues eras.

Thunderous applause followed Rose's announcement that every tune she'd sung was composed by a woman. The same thing began happening back home in the San Francisco area. "I would say," she explains, "the last six songs you heard were written by women.' The place would go crazy. I think people really are surprised to realize that the contributions of women to these songs that we love and revere are so strong, yet we don't know their names. It became a little cause to bring out these writers' names and to tell people a little bit about them."

WILD WOMEN OF SONG, Rose's fifth album, is a collection of 14 songs by 13 different women. Songwriting was the primary occupation of eight: **Bernice Petkere** (1901-2000), **Doris Fisher** (1915-2003), **Dana Suesse** (1909-1987), **Dorothy Fields** (1905-1974), **Kay Swift** (1897-1993), **Vee Lawnhurst** (1905-1992), **Tot Seymour** (1889-1966), and **Maria Grever** (1894-1951). Three—**Peggy Lee** (1920-2002), **Alberta**

Hunter (1895-1984), and **Ida Cox** (1896-1967)—were full-time singers who wrote some of their own material. And carrying the tradition into the present century with three original compositions is Rose herself. She also has launched a web site—www.wildwomenofsong.com—filled with fascinating details about the women represented on the disc.

With depth of feeling, crystalline enunciation, refined musical sensibility, and rich, inviting alto tones, Rose offers fresh, frequently exquisite, takes on the 11 standards presented in **WILD WOMEN OF SONG**. Much of the musical variety that makes the album such a rewarding listening experience stems from the mind of producer Leslie Ann Jones, one of the most successful and respected recording engineers in the business, with a resumé that includes work with such renowned interpreters of the Great American Songbook as Rosemary Clooney, Michael Feinstein, and Carmen McRae, as well as with many leading lights of jazz, pop, rock, R&B, and women's music. Among Jones's numerous suggestions was hiring Matt Catingub to write arrangements and play piano and saxophones for parts of the project.

The son of and former musical director for the late jazz singer Mavis Rivers, Catingub had worked with Jones and vocalist Dianne Reeves on the soundtrack of the 2006 motion picture **Good Night, and Good Luck**. Other input

from Jones included having Rose trade scat- ted fours with drummer Allison Miller on **"I'M IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE"** (something instrumentalists, not vocalists, usually do with drummers). Rose and Jones handpicked the players for each selection, drawing on musicians who often perform with Rose around San Francisco—pianists John R. Burr and Tammy Hall, organist Wayne De La Cruz, and guitarists Danny Caron and Mimi Fox, among them—and out-of-towners Catingub (from Los Angeles) and Miller (from New York).

The program opens with **"I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT YOU."** Written by Peggy Lee and her then-husband, Dave Barbour, it was recorded by Lee in 1946 and was the first of her many self-penned hits. Catingub's blues-bitten alto solo is one of the disc's instrumental highlights.

Rose was initially drawn to **"THAT OLE DEVIL CALLED LOVE"**—melody by Doris Fisher, words by Allan Roberts—by Billie Holiday's 1946 Decca recording with



horns and strings, but arranger Burr gives the present version a George Shearing flavor with his piano-vibes-guitar voicings. (Another Fisher-Roberts composition, **"You Always Hurt the One You Love,"** was a hit in 1945 for producer Jones's late father, bandleader Spike Jones).

"DOWN HEARTED BLUES" was written and recorded by Alberta Hunter in 1922, but it was Bessie Smith who had a massive hit with it that same year. Rose's rendition features pianist Hall. "She's a singer's friend," Rose says. "Her harmonic approach is one of a kind."

Another classic blues, Ida Cox's **"WILD WOMEN (DON'T HAVE THE BLUES),"** dates to 1924. Rose's modern version boasts a boogaloo beat and a robust trombone solo by Doug Beavers.

The prolific Mexican composer Maria Grever wrote **"WHAT A DIFF'RENCE A DAY MADE"** as **"Cuando Vuelva a tu Lado"** (When

You Are Near Me), and Stanley Adams gave English lyrics and a new title and meaning to it in 1934, the year the Dorsey Brothers Orchestra (with singer Bob Crosby) first made it a hit. Rose takes the tune at a relaxed tempo and really lets it breathe.

"AND THEN SOME," by the team of Vee Lawnhurst and Tot Seymour, is perhaps the least-known standard of the bunch, although bandleader Ozzie Nelson hit the top of the charts with it in 1935. Originally written with a 2/4 bounce, Burr's piano trio provides a loose, ethereal groove behind Rose's heart-felt vocal.

Lyricist Dorothy Fields is represented by two selections: **"A FINE ROMANCE,"** written with Jerome Kern and introduced by Fred Astaire in the 1936 film **Swing Time**, and **"I'M IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE,"** written with Jimmy McHugh and first performed by Frances Langford in the 1935 film **Every Night About Eight**. Rose swings both of them hard.

"MY SILENT LOVE," by Dana Suesse ("The Girl Gershwin") and lyricist Edward Heyman, was a hit for Ruby Newman in 1932. Although attracted to the song by Billy Eckstine's lushly orchestrated 1946 version, Rose decided to strip it to its essentials by doing it as a duet with guitarist Mimi Fox.

"CAN'T WE BE FRIENDS," by George Gershwin associate Kay Swift and her lyricist husband, prominent New York banker James Paul Warburg, was first performed in 1929 by Libby Holman in **The Little Show on Broadway**. Rose learned it from Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong's classic 1956 duet recording. In Rose's lightly swinging treatment, trumpeter Mike Olmos offers a tip of the hat to Satchmo.

"CLOSE YOUR EYES," from 1933, is perhaps the best of the many tunes written by Bernice Petkere, who in her day was known as "the Queen of Tin Pan Alley." Rose's organ combo alternates between an Afro-Cuban groove and 4/4 swing, much as the song itself draws on the tension between major and minor keys.

Rose's own three compositions—**"I'M NOT MISSING YOU"** (written with Wayne De La Cruz and Danny Caron), **"BRUISED AROUND THE HEART"** (with Mimi Fox), and **"IF YOU'RE SO SPECIAL"** (with Caron, De La Cruz, and her 20-year-old daughter Emma Dinkelspiel)—provide intriguing insight into romantic relationships and place Rose within the tradition of the women songwriters she so lovingly celebrates. She may not be a wild woman, but her singing and songs sure are wonderful.

—Lee Hildebrand