

„Be What You Want To“ Interview with Jenny Evans

In your latest project most of the songs are pop standards. Above all, you're regarded as a jazz vocalist. Have you crossed over to pop now?

The songs may have been recorded by pop and rock stars but our project is jazz based. I celebrated my 40th jazz jubilee in October 2014 and invited musicians who accompanied me during this time to join me in a concert celebrating my career. Not only the jazz audience but also the musicians in the audience loved it when I rocked on stage. It was then that I had the idea of a project with songs by British rock and pop bands.

So it was back to the roots for you?

You could describe it like that. My older brother was a real blues and rock fan and I listened to all his records in the 60s and 70s. There were so many innovations going on in the pop world. My favourites were the British blues musicians Alexis Korner, John Mayall, Eric Clapton and also the old American blues legends.

The audience and jazz journalists know you as one of the leading jazz vocalists in Germany. Aren't you worried what the jazz police will say?

I've never been worried what audiences and critics think. I have to perform up to my own standards and they're high. The great thing about jazz is that songs are a vehicle for one's own interpretation. Members of the band inspire each other and every time you perform a song it comes out differently.

Which songs are the vehicles in this project?

For example, Eric Clapton's *Cream* song "The Sunshine Of Your Love". I left the famous guitar riff out and started with a walking bass intro and the tension slowly rises and I think the lyrics come more to the fore. I'm very lucky to have guitarist John Paiva and upright bass player Stephan Eppinger in the band as they both sing. That gives me the opportunity to sing the Beatles "She's Leaving Home" accompanied only by guitar and bass and with their background vocals. *Jethro Tull's* "Living In The Past" with Ian Anderson's flute solo and it's 5/4 time is a great jazz vehicle and good for our drummer Manfred Mildenberger. Reeds player Otto Stanilo had the idea to use bass clarinet for Sting's "An Englishman In New York". Songs by *The Eurythmics*, *The Kinks* also inspired me and pianist Matthias Bublath used his accordion to give *The Rolling Stones'* "Paint It Black" a completely new sound. When my brother heard it he told me "Hey, you should send it to Mick and Keith!"

Your late husband Rudi Martini worked a lot with the Stones when he was with the record company WEA in the 1970s.

Yes, he even played percussion on the LP "Goat's Head Soup". All the musicians loved Rudi. Drummer Charly Watts always asked him for the latest jazz albums. I gave the première of this project as a memorial to Rudi. I think he would have been proud of me