

Jenny Evans, do you think you'll grow old gracefully?



I think that that phrase has become obsolete. The first track of my new CD *Even Without You* is "Women of A Certain Age" and at the end of each verse I sing, women of a certain age are good. I hope I'll continue move gracefully and act graciously till the end of my days. I had my 65th birthday in 2019 and I feel younger than I did ten years ago. My husband, the musician and record producer Rudi Martini was diagnosed with Alzheimers in 2009. His death in 2015 and my sorrow and breakdown after that taught me a lot about myself and life as a whole. In 2019 I started doing voluntary work as a care helper for those suffering from Alzheimers.

Is a 65 year old woman still able to enjoy life to the full?

What a ridiculous question – of course she is! I'm a hedonist. I love life and enjoy it, I love good food, being together with friends, everything. But, of course everyone has to find their own source of enjoyment. I've done some soul-searching and realise that I've been good to myself and to others. I've had a good life. In 2001 I recorded a live CD and one of the songs is called *I'm Gonna Live Till I Die*. I think that could be my life's motto.

Is it easier for those who work in the creative arts to do this?

Yes, I think it is, although painters and authors don't get immediate feedback for their work; they work for themselves and then present the finished product. At my concerts the audience immediately reacts to what they hear and see – there is feedback not only with applause but when they talk to me after the concert. My musicians also tell me what they think and their feedback is the most important. Actually, I don't sing for the audience at all. I sing for myself and the band. Jazz is a way to open my heart to the audience. If you sing with such fantastic musicians as I do you create an atmosphere, a feeling that's often like a sexual climax. And the audience can feel this. The marvellous thing about working in the creative arts whether as a musician, an actor, a painter or a writer is that you you assimilate everything you've experienced and when you're older you become more versatile. I'm always interested in trying new things out and widening my boundaries. There's the phrase life-long learning and that will keep me young.

You've been working as a jazz vocalist for over forty years. Is that possible? People say that there's no money to be earned with jazz.

I always regarded myself as simply a singer. When the media started describing me as a jazz singer I thought about this terminology and realised that jazz is the medium that lets me be absolutely authentic on stage and on disc. Singing jazz is being able to improvise, always creating something new. It's like cooking – you know the different techniques, you've got the ingredients and so you dish up something good.

Apart from that I'm a showman, I love interacting with the audience and I want them to love what I do! That doesn't mean that I sing what the audience wants. I come from the theatre and I use the same means of stage-craft above all the dynamics of suspense and release; not only when writing the set order but also in my compositions. As I said, it's like cooking. You want your guests to enjoy the meal so the different aromas form a harmony and the different courses compliment each other.

And what are your plans for the future?

After a number of serious illnesses I've learned that one has to live now. But to do this you have to realise what does you good. As a singer I'm my biggest critic. However, that doesn't lead to worrying about being in control of everything. I'm used to taking risks but I also take heed of what is going on around me. One should never rest on one's laurels. I always want to cross new boundaries and that's the great thing about jazz.