



Ann Hampton Callaway
“At Last”
February 2009

Most people would agree that life is a journey. Finding love along the way – an experience that can be joyous, painful and confusing all at the same time – only makes the journey more interesting and rewarding.

Vocalist and songwriter Ann Hampton Callaway says she wants to help the world fall in love. On her new Telarc release, *At Last* – set for release on February 3, 2009 – she casts a spell that’s likely to help her cause. Callaway calls this collection “love songs for grownups,” because it offers an introspective look at the long road on her way to love that has led her to the fulfillment she has found today.

At Last is a mix of jazz standards, versatile pop songs and a couple original tunes, each woven together to create a narrative that is perhaps as cinematic as it is musical. It’s an album-as-art-form approach that is rapidly disappearing in the burgeoning digital age, says Callaway. “I always think of CDs like movies,” she says. “You wouldn’t download one scene from a movie. You want the whole thing. You want the whole story. An album shouldn’t be just a bunch of songs in a sequence that’s front-loaded with hits. It’s really about creating an emotional journey that starts in one place and ends in a place that’s very different.”

Along with her on the journey are her core trio of pianist Ted Rosenthal, bassist Jay Leonhart and drummer Victor Lewis. Guest musicians include guitarist Rodney Jones, violinist Mads Tolling, saxophonist Teodross Avery, flugelhornist Marvin Stamm, trombonist Wycliffe Gordon and percussionist Emedin Rivera.

The opening track, a cool and smoky reading of Cole Porter’s classic “What Is This Thing Called Love?” serves as the thesis for the remainder of the set. “That’s something I feel like I’ve been trying to figure out for most of my life,” says Callaway.

On the bluesy followup, “Comes Love,” Wycliffe Gordon’s playful trombone work serves as the perfect foil for Callaway’s slinky vocals. “I think Wycliffe’s work on this song is one of my favorite trombone solos that I’ve ever heard on any recording,” says Callaway. “I told him, ‘I want you to be my boyfriend on this song. I want you to talk to me, and I want you to have fun with me and seduce me.’ It was just so exciting, and I always laugh and smile when I hear the energy that he put into this song.”

The emotionally drenched title track took on a life of its own in the studio, says Callaway. The original arrangement was something much more straightforward and understated, but producer Elaine Martone had other ideas. “She said, ‘Ann, this is a real statement that you’re making with

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this song. I feel like you have much more to say here than what this arrangement calls for,” says Callaway. “So we took it to a whole new place in just a few minutes. It became a much more passionate, unbridled version of the song.”

Further in, Callaway’s rendition of Stevie Nicks’ “Landslide” is greatly enhanced by the dual efforts of guitarist Rodney Jones and violinist Mads Tolling. “I thought this was a very powerful song,” says Callaway. “The more I sang it, the more I loved it. I’m so haunted by it.”

Callaway admits that recording the classic “Over the Rainbow” was a daunting task, but given the versatility of the song – the degree to which it speaks to so many of life’s trials and challenges – the range of possible interpretations is actually very wide. “It was wonderful to finally record this song,” says Callaway, who has sung it many times in her live performances. “A song can accumulate so many powerful emotional imprints of life experiences, so that when you take it into the studio, the various emotions that are captured in that moment of recording – the flashes of memories and feelings and experiences – all come to you.”

The closing “On My Way To You” is the clear coda to *At Last*. “This song is really the perfect summation of embracing all the heartaches and the joys that result when someone captures your heart,” says Callaway. “It’s my way of celebrating and embracing everything that it takes to find love in your life and to be ready for it. I think you have to sort of mourn your losses and accept the fact that life will break your heart, but it will put it back together in a better way than you can imagine, if you’re open to it.”

In the end, says Callaway, *At Last* is just as much about self-discovery as it is about discovering that other person who completes the emotional picture. “I think this is probably my most honest CD to date, and I hope people feel the impact of me letting go of some of my perfectionism,” she says. “Letting go, and just becoming as me as possible, is a lot of what I’ve tried to do in the last few years. I think it takes a long time to find the thing that’s uniquely you. As I get older, I seem to be getting closer to that discovery.”

Ann Hampton Callaway’s *At Last* (CD-83665) is due at retail on February 3, 2009.

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