

# BRAITHWAITE & KATZ

Communications

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Lauren Kinhan Pays Tribute to Legendary Vocalist Nancy Wilson in Transformative Fashion on the First All-Standards Album of her Career**

***A Sleepin' Bee* uses Wilson's iconic collaborations with Cannonball Adderley and George Shearing as the starting point for a unique take on the tribute album**

*"Every single song in this collection hits a sweet spot of a different sort, but the most pleasing aspect of the recording is how it uncovers the stripped-down, soulful side of Kinhan's voice."* – Dan Bilawsky, All About Jazz

*"Echoes of the artist in her own voice, that's what so lovingly resounds in the voice of Lauren Kinhan on *A Sleepin' Bee*, her tribute to Nancy Wilson."* – Michael Bourne, WBGO

*"Her approach to the material is anything but conventional; with her big, flexible voice, Kinhan brings the passion of a soul singer to the improvisatory reach of a jazz diva."* – Suzanne Lorge, New York City Jazz Record

*"Her luscious, velvet voice is a good place to rest your weary head."* – Ken Blanchard, Jazznote SD

*"A vocal tour de force"* – Jazz Journal, Sally Evans-Darby

*"Lauren Kinhan is a tremendously gifted jazz singer."* – Christopher Loudon, JazzTimes

#### **CD Release Concerts:**

- **November 8, 2017** – Red Room @ Café 939, WBGO Live Stream – **Boston, MA**
- **January 3, 2018** – JEN Convention – Inspiration Stage – **Dallas, TX**
- **January 11, 2018** – Sheen Center of the Performing Arts, 7 PM Pre Show Talk with Elliot Scheiner and recorded band, and the showing of the *"Making Of A Sleepin' Bee"* mini movie, 8 PM Concert, **NY, NY**
  - **February 17, 2018** — The Nash, **Phoenix, AZ**
  - **March 27**— Mezzrow, **New York, NY**
  - **April 15** — The Coaster Theatre, **Cannon Beach, OR**
  - **May 20** — PDX Spring Jazz Series, The Old Church, **Portland, OR**

**Other Dates TBA**

Whether on her own highly-acclaimed albums, as a 25-year member of the beloved vocal group **New York Voices**, or as co-founder of two diverse and inventive supergroups, **Moss** and **JaLaLa**, singer/songwriter **Lauren Kinhan** has always forged her own path as a performer, composer and improviser. With her latest, ***A Sleepin' Bee*** (due out **October 6** on her own **Dotted i Records**), Kinhan once again steers herself in unexpected directions with a new release that is at once the first all-standards collection of her career, a loving tribute to legendary vocalist **Nancy Wilson**, and unmistakably a Lauren Kinhan album – with all the unique perspective and idiosyncratic personality that has come to imply.

If the sudden appearance of an album's worth of standards in a catalogue dominated by original songs comes as a surprise, the process of its creation is just as atypical. While Kinhan spent much of 2016 conceiving, rehearsing and workshopping the project, the circumstances of the recording arose suddenly through the auspices of her alma mater, **Berklee College of Music**. The session suddenly became an educational opportunity as well as a record date, providing a small group of Berklee students the invaluable privilege of observing and engaging in a recording session at the highest level.

First and foremost, though, *A Sleepin' Bee* is a celebration of Nancy Wilson on the occasion of the genre-hopping singer's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. While Kinhan shares Wilson's penchant for blurring stylistic boundaries, her choice of material focuses on Wilson's early jazz albums, particularly her collaborations with **Cannonball Adderley** and **George Shearing**. Those recordings proved to be a jumping-off point for Kinhan, who utterly transforms these classic and obscure numbers with the help of pianist/creative partner **Andy Ezrin** and veteran

producer **Elliot Scheiner** as well as a stellar band featuring bassist **Matt Penman**, drummer **Jared Schonig** and special guest trumpeter **Ingrid Jensen**.

With three brilliant albums of her own songs under her belt, not to mention her game-changing work with three distinctive vocal groups and wide-ranging collaborations with singular artists from Ornette Coleman to Bobby McFerrin, Kinhan decided it was finally time to create an album more in line with the jazz tradition of interpreting a book of standards. Of course, Kinhan has never been one to follow an obvious route, so the results quickly became something wholly her own. “I approached this project similarly to the way I write songs, except that in this case that creativity was expressed in the arranging and approach to the lyrics,” she explains. “I wanted to make an album that was inspired by Nancy Wilson but still conveys my point of view in the way that I think about, interpret and reimagine music.”

The starting point for the project quickly became *Nancy Wilson/Cannonball Adderley*, the 1961 album on which the 24-year-old singer was backed by Adderley’s incredible quintet with his brother Nat, pianist Joe Zawinul, bassist Sam Jones and drummer Louis Hayes. Kinhan had fallen in love with the album as a young girl searching through her parents’ record collection, enamored with both Wilson’s soulful voice and her elegant image. “I remember being 7 or 8, staring at the cover of this beautiful woman in a yellow dress and connecting with the songs, the arrangements and the bite of her tone. I know those songs like I know the songs of Carole King and Joni Mitchell. So revisiting them, they feel like a favorite cashmere sweater.”

The 12 tracks on *Nancy Wilson/Cannonball Adderley* were evenly split between vocal and instrumental pieces, and Kinhan interprets all but one of the vocal tunes on *A Sleepin’ Bee*. To fill out the repertoire, she began delving into Wilson’s catalogue – only reaching 1964 before she had more than enough to work with. The remaining repertoire is carefully cultivated from Wilson’s early-60s releases, the bulk of it coming from *The Swingin’ Mutual!*, Wilson’s 1960 collaboration with pianist George Shearing.

“In a way,” Kinhan says, “*A Sleepin’ Bee* is also a tribute to Cannonball and George Shearing and the fine musicians that played on the original recordings. The pairing of the voice and great players is what it’s all about. It’s never just about singing for me; it’s the whole creative spectrum of arranging notes and form, and connecting with the musicians.”

Those elements are combined and rearranged in disparate and intriguing ways throughout *A Sleepin’ Bee*, from the laid-back swing of “Let’s Live Again” to the haunted melancholy of “You Don’t Know What Love Is,” whether stretching the melody like taffy on “Never Will I Marry” (parried by Berklee classmate Jensen’s darting trumpet) or finding a playfully bold character at the heart of the title tune. She effectively melds Nat Adderley’s “The Old Country” with Billy Strayhorn’s “Passion Flower,” and fully imbues “Born To Be Blue” with the remorseful mood inherent in its title. Kinhan’s vulnerable, stripped-down version of “Save Your Love For Me” completely reimagines Wilson’s iconic take – which Kinhan previously performed both with and for Wilson herself, first on a recording with the New York Voices and later with the Voices as part of Wilson’s 2004 induction as a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master.

Perhaps the most surprising inclusion is Wilson’s debut single, “Guess Who I Saw Today,” whose lyrics haven’t exactly aged well. Kinhan puts a new twist on the tune not only with her sly vocal performance - which acidly comments on a song that frames its tale of infidelity with some decidedly Eisenhower-era social mores – but with an updated arrangement that makes the song her own, apart from Wilson’s quintessential version.

“You better have a perspective on this song, especially as a woman who’s been an outspoken feminist my whole life,” Kinhan says. “It’s not that cheating is old-fashioned; it’s the way that the story is pitched from the beginning, drawing an outmoded picture of marriage where the woman stays home, does the shopping and dotes on her husband, who spends his day at work. To chew on those words was so strange - but it was also fun to hold that mirror up to society and look at its absurdity.”

“(You Don’t Know) How Glad I Am” was a fresh discovery for Kinhan in her research for the project. Despite Wilson’s recording having won a Grammy in 1964, it was not that version but a less ornate live rendition that grabbed Kinhan’s ear, and she takes a similar approach, powerfully singing with gospel-inflected soul accompanied only by Ezrin’s lyrical piano and Penman’s subtle bass. The at times inane lyrics of “Happy Talk” are sent up in a slapstick carnival atmosphere to close the album on a particularly offbeat note.

Recording the album with multiple Grammy-winner Elliot Scheiner at Berklee’s state-of-the-art Shames Family Scoring Stage meant turning the studio into a classroom, a prospect that at first seemed daunting but that Kinhan quickly embraced. “The students brought a performance atmosphere to the session that was beautiful,” she says. “Normally recording sessions can make you incredibly self-conscious, often putting yourself under the microscope, but knowing there was an audience was really liberating. The students witnessed great players

laying it down right in front of their eyes, and that made for an inspired environment. The added bonus of sharing Nancy Wilson's legacy with them was a Sleepin' Bee we hope to have reawakened for generations to come."

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