



Featured Artist: Karen Blixt

CD Title: Spin This

Year: 2006

Record Label: HiFi Records

Style: Jazz Vocals

Musicians: Karen Blixt - Vocals Joey DeFrancesco - Hammond B3 and Vocals Buddy Montgomery - Vibes Russell Ferrante - Piano Alex Acuna - Percussion, Drums Many Special Guests

Review: CALIFORNIA DREAMIN' KAREN BLIXT – SPIN THIS West Coast Jazz had it's own sound before Ronald Reagan wore diapers or kissed a monkey, back to about when Ulysses S. Grant nearly gave the-entire-country-and-everything-in-it to his friends-and-otherwise-Mickey-Mouse-business-associates already running it, time-before Tom Scott and L.A.Express first rolled up the coast, inland and outward to mountain and desert, the likes of Paul McCandless and Paul Winter's wolf moving mist across John Hedges's little, white, pick-up truck's windshield whirring down the ocean highway, that perfect wave-crashing-on-rock West Coast Om-Tone-in-a-Chinese-Vase epitomized in the banging chord of Pat Metheny's 'San Lorenzo'. On Spin This, Karen Blixt's fresh-woman, California outing, Ms. Blixt keeps all avenues of motion open, taking the Jazz Train further and farther down the vocal line. She 'comes-on-all-Ella', on Spin's Count-Basie opening, 'Swingin' the Blues,' and to the steam-ship Hammond B-3 of Joey DeFrancesco, Ms. Blixt scats, Bruce Forman's fingers Rjango-ing the guitar strings, Will Kennedy and Alex Acuna laying out a shuffle of saucy, side-walkers going where they will. Comes a run then of two Rogers & Hammerstein songs, 'Carefully Taught' jumping its rhythms from light to dark, even back-peddling to 'Bali Hai' West Coast, and The Sound of Music's 'My Favorite Things' brought to bright Adult Contemporary through dreams of Paula-Abdul-as-a-young-girl, a touch of Judy Garland salsa-seasoned, and timbales of Barry Manilow's 'Lola', the vocal hinting Karen's heard a Dinah Shore song somewhere. Out of the chill from solo, boulevard stroll, Arnold/Walker's 'You Don't Know Me' lazes into the lounge and orders a vermouth with nothing to chase it save headlights and neon signs, naked ice cubes clinging one another, Harry Connicking between vibes and Hammond into an early-morning, mournful sunrise. Cole Porter's 'Night and Day' gets the garden free and the thorn at no extra charge, a pull and push, asleep and awake, above, all around, even in the refrigerator and halls of Sheldon Brown's bass clarinet, above Joe Herbert's cello, below Paul McCandless's English horn. Frank Martin 'Grusin's' the mood and Alex Acuna bangs garbage can lid and anything lying around until the vocal slips back like hot air from the Mojave Desert, rising on the cello, reaching for San Lorenzo, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland, Big Sur, San Diego and all points between, Brazilian Mardi Gras drums taking us down the street and around the corner. But our wound's wide open on Spin This's self-titled first original, distilled-legal-pad-margin notes from a well-orchestrated White House press briefing. Judas kiss this: "A double-speak addiction makes you dizzy, leaves you dim, and you'll go down in history as a puppet of spin, "Spin This' deserves a listen for rap-sample and 'Snoop-Dogged' delivery. Monk/Ferro's 'It's Over Now (Well You Needn't)' grunts and snorts like an ant-eater trying to kick start a vacuum cleaner and keeps a funky, snake-charm feel where the snake is charming the charmer. A

camel comes with a saxophone and Ms. Blixt walks it to market, and after some bartering back and forth, sneaks off to a room at the top of hidden, side-street stairs, banging the door fast behind her. 'Now It's Over' a nineteen second animal sound byte is geckos scattering from an elephant on a clarinet. Tuxedo-ing up and wheeling to the Vegas Sands, we steer onstage, liquor/condiment-cart complete with the ghosts of Joey Bishop, Peter Lawford, Sammy Davis, Jr., The Chairman of the Board, and the dark-haired, handsomely swaggering Dean Martin in the hailing shape and hearty form of Joey DeFrancisco for 'When You're Smiling' and Lawrence Welk sneaks into the main room when Joey slip-slides the Hammond B-3. Natural colors of California's north country shade 'Kitchen Blue', a Blixt/Martin penning, trio-ed like spring air, warm sun, and blue sky with Russell Ferrante's piano, Darek Okes acoustic bass, and Will Kennedy's drums. Mile Davis's 'Four' bops like Joni Mitchell on her cover of Ross & Greg's 'Twisted' off 1973's Court and Spark. Karen boards a train at Capitol Records on Sunset Boulevard, pulls down all the shades, and flicks the torch-singer's flame on Jimmy Van Heusen's and Johnny Mercer's 'I Thought About You', Buddy Montgomery's lone piano pulling her down a lonely track, the ghost of Susanna McCorkle sitting on Tom Waits keyboard stool. We're airborne on an oboe of Paul McCandless for the album's farewell 'Something So True', a second Blixt/Martin song celebrating a rebirth of sunlight and courage for one more day of love and laughter, two medicines of which this weary, wobbling world can right now use a measured dose in double. As we make to blow up everything and turn neighbor against neighbor, Karen keeps s civilized and seasonally-charmed demeanor, a California characteristic for re-inventing Forever, summer all year long, the glint of hope ours is not the generation to pulverize all that is wonderful back to grey dust and cosmic debris. Spin This – Karen Blixt – Produced and Arranged by Frank Martin – Recorded at Skywalker Sound by Leslie Ann Jones, 2006, for HiFi Records. Scott Mastro has lived all over the place. He continues to do so. scottmastro@gmail.com

Tracks: 1. Swingin' the Blues - Basie/Durham/Hendricks - 4:36 2. Carefully Taught - Rogers/Hammerstein - 5:13 3. My Favorite Things - Rogers/Hammerstein - 4:12 4. You Don't Know Me - Arnold/Walker - 5:52 5. Night and Day - Porter - 8:21 6. Spin This - Martin/Blixt - 4:37 7. It's Over Now (Well, You Needn't) - Monk/Ferro - 3:47 8. Now It's Over - 0:19 9. When You're Smiling - Fisher/Goodwin/Shay - 6:58 10. Kitchen Blue - Martin/Blixt - 4:02 11. Four - Davis/Hendricks - 4:55 12. I Thought About You - Van Heusen/Mercer - 5:21 13. Something So True - Martin/Blixt - 4:19

Record Label Website: <http://www.karenblixt.com>

Artist's Website: <http://ww.karenblixt.com>

Reviewed by: [Scott Mastro](#)