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RECORDS

SARAH  
VAUGHAN  
LIVE at  
*Scoley's*



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# SARAH VAUGHAN LIVE AT ROSY'S

SARAH VAUGHAN *vocals*  
CARL SCHROEDER *piano*  
WALTER BOOKER *bass*  
JIMMY COBB *drums*

In February of 2011, Resonance's good friend Michael Cuscuna introduced me to Tim Owens, the former producer of the weekly NPR-syndicated radio program, *Jazz Alive!* Tim had in his possession a collection of tapes from original broadcasts of the *Jazz Alive!* series. Among these tapes were recordings of stellar performances by Sarah Vaughan live in concert at Rosy's Jazz Club in New Orleans from May of 1978. *Jazz Alive!*'s crew had traveled to New Orleans with host Billy Taylor for the broadcast and ended up running tape on an extra set of performances—two sets by Sassy—some of which never aired on NPR.

This two-disc set contains nearly 90 minutes of music. The tapes comprised eight multitrack reels and were quite well recorded. The rhythm section (or as Sassy put it, "my trio") was extremely tight. The band was made up of pianist and arranger, Carl Schroeder, bassist Walter Booker and legendary drummer Jimmy Cobb. This band played hundreds of performances around the globe with Sarah Vaughan and in the recordings in this set, these three masters' empathy with one another and their consummate cohesiveness as a unit are undeniable.

We've included essays representing a variety of points of view here in the booklet to place the music and the setting in perspective. My goal was to tell the whole story of this magical engagement that fortunately has been preserved for future generations to enjoy. First, we have essays by two acclaimed journalists, Will Friedwald and James Gavin.

They are among the most lauded current writers on music, both of them justly celebrated, particularly for their thoughtful and authoritative pieces on singers of jazz and the great American songbook. We also include first-person accounts of what it was like to play with Sassy from Carl Schroeder and Jimmy Cobb. I also had the good fortune to speak with another legendary singer (and former label mate of Sarah's on EmArcy Records), the great Helen Merrill, and that interview is also included here. Finally, we've included recollections from the owner of Rosy's Jazz Club, Rosalie "Rosy" Wilson, herself.

These recordings celebrate the genius that was Sarah Vaughan. I hope we'll all take the time to revisit the legacy of this historic and pivotal figure in the history of jazz. These recordings demonstrate for us why she was much more than just a singer; she was a true artist.

## ZEV FELDMAN

Los Angeles, August, 2015





Photographer Unknown

## Romance, Family & Heartbreak: The Divine One

By 1978, Sarah Vaughan was a jazz goddess at her vocal peak; professionally, too, she was flying high. That year Vaughan (who turned 54 on March 27, 1978) debuted a symphonic Gershwin program. It would win her an Emmy and a Grammy and take her around the world several times. Each time she released an album, Johnny Carson and Merv Griffin showcased her proudly on TV. Vaughan would unleash the most sumptuous voice in jazz, then chat shyly in a little-girl mumble.

For all the grand orchestras that backed her, "The Divine One" seemed happiest with just her trio, who left this vocal peacock maximum room to spread her plumage. "I get ideas from all three of them while I'm singing," she said. "We have a ball together, all of us, and wherever I go to work, they're going with me." In 1978, Vaughan and her band—pianist Carl Schroeder, bassist Walter Booker, and drummer Jimmy Cobb—performed at Rosy's Jazz Club in New Orleans. Highlights from two sets were broadcast on the National Public Radio series *Jazz Alive!* Now, thanks to this release, those shows can finally be heard in near-complete form.

By the time of Vaughan's performances at Rosy's captured in this set, her dark-chocolate voice had more than survived 36 years of professional singing (and about as many of smoking cigarettes); her art had only grown in splendor. She took dusky subterranean plunges and glided up to fluty soprano highs; she colored the three octaves in between with a wealth of textures, from gravel to velvet. Vaughan controlled her famous vibrato like a concert violinist; she could make it swagger, pulse, or vanish entirely.

Behind the vocal riches was a boundless musical mind. "As soon as I hear an arrangement I get ideas," she said, "kind of like blowing a horn." So many came to her that Vaughan was like a child let loose in a candy store. "She had tremendous harmonic con-

ception," says Carl Schroeder. "Most singers have none." Her breath control enabled her to skitter tirelessly over daredevil bebop changes and to sing ballads at a luxurious crawl. Vaughan's band's sheet music for "Round Midnight" was marked with her preferred tempo: "AS SLOW AS POSSIBLE."

All this came naturally to her. "I don't know what I'm doin'!" she said. "I just get onstage and sing. I don't think about how I'm going to do it—it's too complicated."

For Vaughan, who died on April 3, 1990 of lung cancer, the stage was a playground; a place to escape from whatever hurt her. Like most of her female jazz-singing peers, Vaughan had not fared well in the love department; three long relationships with the men who managed her—two of them her husbands, one not—had finished unhappily, or worse. When interviewer Rory O'Connor posed a question about George Treadwell, her Sven-gali-like husband in the '40s and '50s, Vaughan angrily cut him off: "I'm going to throw up!"

In 1978, however, she was giddily in love with Waymon Reed, a trumpeter from Count Basie's band, sixteen years her junior. And her trio felt like family to her. Eight years earlier, Vaughan had hired Jimmy Cobb, a superb veteran drummer. Cobb's most celebrated credit—he played on several of Miles Davis's greatest albums, including *Kind of Blue* and *Sketches of Spain*—dominated a resume packed with stellar collaborations, including work with John Coltrane, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Wes Montgomery, Stan Getz and Bill Evans. Cobb could play driving bebop, but he also shaded ballads with delicacy and restraint, which made him ideal for Vaughan.

She found the same flexibility in Carl Schroeder, who had replaced the exiting Bill Mays in 1972. Born in Jamaica, Long Island, the young pianist had played with Roy Haynes and Art Blakey, so he knew plenty about bebop. Vaughan, he said, "never made any suggestions to me, ever. I think she once said, 'Oh, Carl, just play those sexy chords!' I tried to play just enough so that people could hear what she was doing, which was really miraculous."

Schroeder had joined Cobb and Vaughan in living out of a suitcase. The star spoke wistfully of spending more time in Hidden Hills, the secluded Los Angeles suburb where she lived with her mother, Ada, and her teenage daughter, Deborah. But like Ella Fitzgerald, Vaughan grew restless fast if she wasn't singing. The rigors of the road didn't seem to bother her. On many a U.S. tour, she even rented a station wagon and drove her group from gig to gig. "That was therapy for her," says Schroeder. Vaughan could lose her cool onstage if soundmen fiddled with the levels; she knew better than any of them how to control a mike.

Otherwise, she was a good sport. The pianist remembers a concert in Paris at a theater that, by day, also housed a circus. The animals stayed in the basement, and during Vaughan's show, waves of odor and wildlife noises seeped into the theater. Vaughan found it hilarious. In Australia, she performed on an outdoor stage above a pool full of porpoises. "Sure enough," says Schroeder, "the porpoises started chiming in with little squeals and squeaks. Sarah was imitating them." After a show, says Cobb, "she could hang out better than most women I know." Stories from her fabled past—notably her stint with the pioneer all-star bop orchestra of Billy Eckstine in the mid-'40s—tumbled out of her.

She had a ball at Rosy's. The club's founder, Rosy Wilson, was a twenty-one-year-old, jazz-loving heiress. In 1976, she had spent a substantial chunk of her fortune on renovating a 19<sup>th</sup>-century brick warehouse at the corner of Valence Street and Tchoupitoulas Street in uptown New Orleans, near the Mississippi River. Rosy's Jazz Club held 200 patrons; its charms included a wraparound balcony, French doors that reached the ceiling, and a brace of fig trees in a two-story glass atrium. Wilson spent tremendous sums on talent; her headliners ranged from Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald and Ray Charles to Bob Dylan, Stevie Wonder, the Eagles and the Who. No amount of sellout attendance could cover operating costs, and Wilson closed in 1979 at a huge loss!

But while it lasted, Rosy's Jazz Club was "one of those nice, soulful, funky clubs," as Schroeder recalls it. Vaughan brought her standard repertoire of chestnuts that she could blow on endlessly—"I'll Remember April," "East of the Sun," "Fascinating Rhythm," "The Man I Love." Gershwin was on her mind; Vaughan also sang "Somebody Loves Me," which she had never recorded and which didn't make her touring Gershwin show. On these and other medium- and uptempo tunes, Vaughan was like a human tenor sax, swinging hard and treating the words like mere notes.

She saved the drama for her ballads. All the ones she sang at Rosy's held meaning for her. Vaughan had recorded "Time After Time" in 1946, just as she was tasting her first popular success. "Poor Butterfly" had been a signature of hers since 1956; she loved its exotic love story, based on *Madame Butterfly*. "If You Went Away," by the Rio-born composer Marcos Valle, opens *I Love Brazil* (1977), the album that had sealed her love affair with that country's music.

In many shows, she and Schroeder teamed up for a roaming, out-of-tempo "My Funny Valentine," the ultimate example of her gift for finding improvisational gold in a well-built classic. "I would have to follow her," says the pianist. "Just when you thought that her standard ending was coming, she'd do something different. That was part of the fun."

She kept her personal life out of her songs, with some exceptions. Vaughan couldn't skate over the depths of Benard Ighner's "Everything Must Change," with its Buddha-like philosophy: "Winter turns to spring/A wounded heart will heal/But never much too soon." In 1974 she had recorded Stephen Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns," the autumnal reflection of an actress who had put career before love. An ill-conceived swing arrangement had sabotaged that version, but Vaughan felt the song had other possibilities. By the time she sang it at Rosy's, "Send in the Clowns" had become a lavishly ornamented aria whose rococo majesty only heightened the sting of its key lines: "Making my entrance again with

my usual flair/Sure of my lines/No one is there." Oftentimes when Vaughan sang the song, that last phrase emerged with a sob.

But the public knew little about her troubles. Shortly after the death of her father, Vaughan had sung at the Troubadour in Los Angeles. Before her sets she lay in her dressing room, crying. Then, tears dried, "she'd go out there in front of a full house and just destroy them," says Schroeder.

Vaughan still longed for the romantic bliss she sang about, and for a while she found it with Waymon Reed. After marrying him, she made him her bandleader. Reed wanted to use his own sidemen; reluctantly, the singer complied. In 1979, Cobb and Booker were let go. In a show of solidarity, Schroeder resigned. The marriage, like her others, ended up breaking her heart. But on these CDs we hear the Divine One at her happiest, afloat in a musical world where glorious things were within close reach.

**JAMES GAVIN**, New York City, 2013

James Gavin's books include *Stormy Weather: The Life of Lena Horne* and *Deep in a Dream: The Long Night of Chet Baker*.

<sup>1</sup> After a stint as a sports bar and after lying vacant for a time, the establishment was reopened in 1999 under new ownership as Rosy's Jazz Hall and Events Catering. Despite its name, adopted out of respect for Rosalie Wilson, the current incarnation of the venue is no longer formally associated with her.





## Clowning with Sassy

"WELL, I'LL BE DAMNED!"

It's what you call an "aha" moment. Sarah Vaughan is kidding around with the crowd, with her usual flair, in the way she did at nearly all of her concerts. (By this point in her career, she was remarkably comfortable in front of audiences.) The crowd starts calling out requests—not that she asked for them—and someone, off-mic, apparently asks for "A-Tisket, A-Tasket." The challenge is too great for her to pass up. It's important to remember that this is the same Sarah who would make a spectacular show out of just introducing her band. She would call out the musicians' names one by one, and then very coyly turn to the crowd and say, "and for those of you who don't know who I am . . ." at which point she would pause, leaving a spot for the audience to laugh, "There may be some of you who don't know who I am. My name is Carmen McRae!" (She does a slight variation on this, in tandem with pianist Carl Schroeder to this effect early in this particular show.)

When the request comes through for "Tisket," which was, famously, her colleague Ella Fitzgerald's first and biggest hit, Vaughan says, with mock exasperation, "Well, I'll be damned!" Clearly, it was one thing for Vaughan to make a joke about being mistaken for another singer, and quite another for someone in the crowd to confuse her with Ella Fitzgerald. Yet not to be outdone, she takes it a step further, "[he] thinks I'm Lena Horne, huh?"—thereby compounding the joke by dropping the name of yet a third iconic African-American vocal headliner. "Then I'll tell you who I am when I finish," she declares, "We got to do this," and then flies into a whole chorus of the 1938 song.

It's especially significant, not only because it shows that Vaughan had a sense of humor about herself, and also that she had a firm understanding of where she stood in the pantheon of great American entertainers and artists. And it also further shows us what Sarah

Vaughan was not—namely, Ella Fitzgerald. It would be hard to say that anyone was a greater artist than Vaughan, or had a better voice or a grander style, even Fitzgerald; but over the long haul, Fitzgerald had a more consistently productive career. While both singers were on the road constantly, playing to sold-out houses across the globe, Fitzgerald was by far the more celebrated; the one you were more likely to see on mainstream TV, the one whose recording career progressed from strength to strength without a letup for five decades. Vaughan, contrastingly and unfortunately, would go through extended periods, often at the very height of her powers, wherein she hardly went into the studio at all.

In 1978, she was ending such a long dry spell. Between 1977 and 1979, Vaughan would record six studio albums for Norman Granz's Pablo Records. Otherwise, the last 20 years of her career were a virtual desert, interrupted only by the occasional oasis. There were exceptions, and they were usually the live albums—most famously her amazing 1973 concert in Tokyo (a world-beater of a performance if ever there was one) and a far more obscure set recorded in Los Angeles with pianist Jimmy Rowles a year later.

This 1978 show, made just as her Pablo albums were about to start coming out, is also a keeper. The trio is two-thirds of the same rhythm section who accompanied her on the fateful Japanese concert of five years earlier, with pianist Carl Schroeder (wearing a beard that made him look like Lincoln, an observation of Vaughan's which is verified by a concert video from that same year in Sweden) and drummer Jimmy Cobb (best known for playing on Miles Davis's *Kind Of Blue*, but deserving of equal acclaim for his work with singers like Dinah Washington and Vaughan). They're joined by veteran bebop bassist Walter Booker, who had played with Betty Carter before joining Vaughan in 1976.

Throughout her career, it was part of Vaughan's method to use "chasers": She would provide contrast from her big epic ballads with shortish renditions of familiar standards in an unbelievably fast tempo. "I'll Remember April" is taken almost ludicrously fast for a song

usually done as a slow ballad, but it's merely Sarah showing her sassy side. No one could make it work at this tempo, but Vaughan does. "Like Someone In Love" is done in a romping, Basie-esque treatment that starts with just Mr. Booker behind her for the first half of the first chorus (the opening AB of the ABAB). And there's even a quote from "Pop Goes The Weasel" in an allusion to Basie's version of "April In Paris." "East of the Sun" features even more Booker (it's just voice and bass all the way) and an overtly Basie-esque three-note tag, as she acknowledges verbally. The longest uptempo number is an extended blues that begins with a full-on piano solo by Schroeder, which Sarah joins imperceptibly, scatting in a way that few others could. Her wordless episode is followed by solo statements from Booker and Cobb.

Gershwin, as always, is a major staple of Vaughan's repertoire, from her classic Gershwin double songbook in 1957 to her epic symphonic jazz concerts (and album) of 25 years later. Here, "Somebody Loves Me" has a hint of postmodernism in the vamp and the harmonies—this is definitely a post-*Kind of Blue* treatment. Speaking of Jimmy Cobb, the drummer gets a break in between the verbal opening chorus and Vaughan's ingenious scat episode on "Fascinating Rhythm" (which leads into a baroque episode that anticipates the routine that Mel Tormé would later do on "Pick Yourself Up"). "The Man I Love" was one of the Divine One's signature ballads. As with Fitzgerald, there were some songs and some lyrics that meant to more to her than others, and this song always occupied an extra special place in her heart. You'll often hear Vaughan take a serious ballad and completely jazz it up (as she does with "April" here), but when she does this particular song, you can tell she's only thinking about the man she loves.

Vaughan also does right by Rodgers and Hart with a full-on ballad version of "My Funny Valentine" that climaxes the second disc and there's also a fast and modish "I Could Write A Book." Her longtime ballad perennials, "Poor Butterfly" and "I Remember You" are rep-



resented in superlative readings as well. Vaughan's concerts in this period are also notable for several standout ballads that turn up only on live dates—not in the studio—like Bernard Ighner's "Everything Must Change," a pop hit masterminded by her good friend Quincy Jones, which she easily transforms into a kind of classic.

In 1978, "Send in the Clowns" was gradually evolving into her climactic, show-stopping number. The Sondheim song kept getting longer and longer, growing bigger and bigger as well as slower and slower, and being pushed farther and farther back in the program. Still, it would be hard to say that Vaughan ever sang it better than she did in New Orleans: She absolutely nails it, and makes it clear why, of all the songs and shows that he's written over almost 60 years, this is easily Sondheim's most beloved piece of music. Ostensibly a show tune, this was the vehicle for Vaughan's gospel chops. Much earlier in her career she had named "The Lord's Prayer" as her favorite of her own recordings, and she channels that spiritual energy into this song. In *A Little Night Music*, the song is about the relationship between a man and a woman, but as she sings, it's clearly about the relationship between man and God. She could be singing it in a funky little club or the grandest concert hall in the land, it didn't matter—with "Clowns," the Divine One was taking us all to church. It wasn't so much about clowns being sent in as it was the Saints going marching in.

Hard to believe that Vaughan could keep right on singing after that; that she wasn't completely drained physically, emotionally and morally, and even more so that Vaughan could deliver a performance like this nearly every night of her life—sometimes twice in one day.

Three years after this performance in New Orleans—a remarkable show even by Vaughan's Olympian standards—Vaughan was appearing at the North Sea Jazz Festival. At the usual point in the concert, she stopped the music, took a breather and did her routine of soliciting the crowd for requests. Surprisingly, by 1981 she was completely and comically opposed to the song she was amused by in 1978. She tells the crowd, "if you ask for 'A-Ticket,

A-Tasket' I'm outa here!" Make no mistake, Sarah Vaughan knew exactly who she was and what she could do. It's one of the things that made her great.

#### **WILL FRIEDWALD**

Noted writer and music critic Will Friedwald is the author of *Jazz Singing: America's Great Voices from Bessie Smith to Bebop and Beyond*, *Sinatra! The Song is You: A Singer's Art*, *Stardust Melodies: the Biography of Twelve of America's Most Popular Songs and Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies* and *A Biographical Guide to the Great Jazz and Pop Singers*. One of the foremost authorities on the American songbook, his pieces have appeared frequently in *The Wall Street Journal* and elsewhere.

## Impresario Rosalie Wilson Reflects on Rosy's & Sarah Vaughan

Recently, Zev Feldman contacted me on behalf of Resonance Records regarding the album, *Sarah Vaughan Live at Rosy's*.

Zev asked if I would provide historical perspective and share memorable moments regarding Rosy's, the music club I opened and operated in New Orleans from 1976 to 1978. Of particular interest was the week of Sarah Vaughan's engagement, especially, the evening of May 31, 1978, when Ms. Vaughan and I agreed to allow a live broadcast, produced by Tim Owens and Steve Rathe for NPR's *Jazz Alive!* series, in tandem with Rosy's, hosted by Billy Taylor.

Before reminiscing about Sarah Vaughan, I think it might be best to put Rosy's into perspective. By that I'm referring, primarily, to why and when it happened. Between 1972 and 1974, I lost both of my parents ten months apart, entered and exited a marriage and was eager to reconnect to areas of importance in my life. At first it seemed as though I was going to succeed in giving some of the better and wilder parties in town at which the Neville Brothers, Professor Longhair and other great New Orleans talent played. This was fun and a release; but ultimately, not satisfying.

I was nineteen years old and I loved modern jazz. One evening I saw Rahsaan Roland Kirk, the virtuoso multi-instrumentalist, in concert. As this was close to the end of his life, I was not able to experience him in top form. Still, the essence of this great artist was present.

I was puzzled as to why one seldom experienced these musicians in club settings. Roland Kirk explained this phenomenon during an interview several days later, citing the continued reticence of many black artists to play clubs or smaller venues in the South for reasons of

safety, treatment by club owners and the general negative conditions. I knew he was being truthful and I found this to be perverse, given the fact that New Orleans had long been anointed the birthplace of jazz. This angered me and provided the cause this rebel had long been seeking: to create a music club or venue in which the safety, respect and needs of the musicians were the first priority. One in which a "zero tolerance" policy would exist regarding any form of prejudice.

As unlikely as the success of such an idealistic business model may seem, I'm convinced that it was the belief and faith in this possibility that opened doors previously shut. Roland Kirk's acceptance to be the first artist engaged by Rosy's was proof in itself. Not only did Rahsaan accept my invitation to open Rosy's, but he told other artists, also reticent about playing clubs in the South, to play mine. I know this, because they told me. And it grew from there. I shall always be in his debt.

### **Sassy comes to Rosy's**

For one week beginning at the end of May in 1978, New Orleans audiences had the luxury of experiencing Sarah Vaughan, undeniably one of greatest vocalists the world has ever known, "up close and personal." Her engagement at Rosy's was special from the very beginning. When I introduced myself, she just gave me this wonderful all-knowing smile and said, "We're going to have a wonderful week! And by the way, call me Sassy!"

On Wednesday afternoon, May 31, 1978, Tim Owens watched as Billy Taylor taped an interview with Sarah Vaughan that would air during the live broadcast that evening. When we spoke recently, Tim remembered, "Sarah Vaughan was feeling really good that afternoon and in magnificent form that night. In fact, [she was] quite 'up' and 'giddy.'" Tim generously added, "That wonderful vibe that you created in your club also contributed to her stellar performance that night."



That evening, May 31, 1978, was the first time I had considered a joint venture or joint production at Rosy's, but this was NPR's Tim Owens, a gentleman in the truest sense of the word, who was already gaining great respect amongst his peers and who would later become one of the most revered people in jazz programming, or as Murray Horwitz, his fellow NPR broadcaster and founding director of AFI Silver Theater and Cultural Center said, "No one in the history of American public broadcasting has done more than Tim Owens to provide first-rate jazz programming to the nation."

The evening went off without a glitch.

After speaking with Tim recently, I began reflecting on what made Sassy's vocal moments so "magical." I remembered her extraordinarily demanding set list and how deeply she affected me each evening. To this day, her rendition of Stephen Sondheim's classic, "Send in the Clowns," is the greatest I've ever heard.

I came across a comment response made by the great Billie Holiday, when asked to describe her "secret" as a singer. She said, "I never sing a song the same way twice." This "simple" explanation may be the best description of what separates truly great musicians from all others, or any great artist from those who wallow in mediocrity. It certainly applied to Sassy, as each song, each evening was a brand new experience. Personally, I cannot imagine a greater gift any artist could offer than courageously trusting us with true spontaneity.

In closing, I want to thank Zev Feldman and George Klabin for this opportunity to participate in their project. Additionally, I must thank Tim Owens for participating in that special event decades ago and spending time recently, reminiscing.

**ROSY WILSON**

August 13, 2013



## Carl Schroeder Remembers "Sass 'Round the World"

Sarah Vaughan had the rare ability to perform at a high creative level night after night; she was always reaching for something new to say. I had the privilege of being her pianist during the 1970s.

With the great Jimmy Cobb (*Kind of Blue*) on drums and outstanding bassists like Bob Magnusson, Monk Montgomery, and Walter Booker, Sarah's rhythm section gave her what she wanted: a driving, swinging, pulsing groove that inspired her to new sounds every night. Sometimes the speed of a song (some charts had tempo indications like "As Fast as Possible!") was so fast that when it was over, she would calmly lie down on the stage of, say, Carnegie Hall and catch her breath! Her audience understood and approved.

Sarah Vaughan's husband at the time was Marshall Fisher<sup>1</sup>. He managed her career and was able to find new venues for her to sing. Early on in her career, she worked with just a rhythm section; a trio made up of piano, bass and drums. Soon though, she was working with the big bands of Count Basie and Duke Ellington and eventually with symphony orchestras, as well.

Imagine the sound of Sarah Vaughan singing a Benny Carter arrangement with the Count Basie band driven by Jimmy Cobb!

Grammy-nominated twice for the same live concert album, *Live In Japan*,<sup>2</sup> Sarah traveled the entire globe with her beautiful musical message.

When we performed in a small village in the African kingdom of Lesotho, the entire village lined up on the airport runway to wave goodbye after her concert.

The good people of Bari, on the Adriatic coast of southern Italy, waited patiently for her for two hours; terrible traffic had delayed our arrival. The cheer that went up when our bus

pulled in was *molto fortissimo*. Sarah appreciated that those fans had waited for her and she sang her heart out for them. And they loved it!

In a Paris concert hall where the circus performed during the day, lions and tigers were kept in cages under the stage at night.

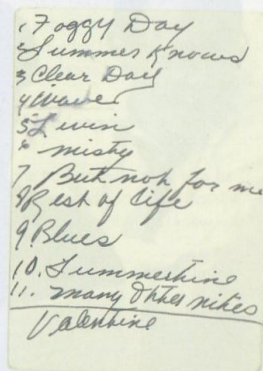
Sarah's concert was in the evening and once she started singing, the animals were inspired to roar along. After intermission, when lions and tigers had been fed and felt the need to answer Nature's call, their musical contributions were matched by an odor of organic profundity that provided an unforgettable atmosphere for the evening!

In Brisbane, Australia, our concert stage was built above a pool where dolphins were housed. Needless to say, as soon as Sarah Vaughan started her immortal rendition of the ballad "Lover Man," not even the dolphins could resist the urge to "whistle" along. The best part was when Sarah started whistling back at them, the dolphins responded and the Brisbane audience enjoyed a truly impromptu jam session!

Her golden voice justified the sobriquet she had been given - "The Divine One" Sarah.

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Vaughan and Marshall Fisher were never actually married.

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Vaughan won a Grammy for "Gershwin Live!" with Michael Tilson Thomas and the Los Angeles Philharmonic in 1982.



Set list from the 1970s.  
(Courtesy of Carl Schroeder)



## "One of the fellas..." Jimmy Cobb Remembers Sarah Vaughan

**ZEV FELDMAN:** What was Sarah Vaughan like? What it was like working with her?

**JIMMY COBB:** Well, it was a very good choice for me to join her trio because it had been offered to me a couple of times before and I just didn't want to be in a trio with a singer at that time. But later on, a couple of guys in the band requested me: Jan Hammer and Gene Perla. They were already there. She asked them who would they like to have as a drummer and they suggested me. So that's how I got there.

**How long had you known her? Did you know her for a long time before you went to work with her?**

No, I didn't know her. I just knew about her. I knew what she had done. I kinda knew her history a little bit, because I had been interested in Billy Eckstine's band and I knew that she had been there. She and Billy had made some records together and all that, so I knew just regular information about her.

**What was it like to play in the birthplace of jazz, New Orleans, back in the 1970s?**

Well, I don't know. It was strange. It was very prejudiced back then still. I remember working in one place. There was a guy down there had a place, Blaise D'Antoni. He used to bring boxing down to New Orleans, so he was kind of a big man in town. I didn't work there with Sarah, I worked there with some other people. I worked there with Dinah Washington. At that time, they didn't want us to stay in the club after we performed. They liked us not to be in the club. So D'Antoni, he was strong enough to protect us. He had a table right at the foot of the bandstand. He told us, "Well y'all, this is where you'll be. You can stay here while you're off." Then the detectives came in and told him that that wasn't possible. So then he bought a little trailer that would sit outside the club so we could be

there when we were off the stage. But this wasn't with Sarah; before the '70s, I don't think I worked in New Orleans with Sarah. This is just telling you how America . . . how New Orleans used to be.

**What was Sarah like on and off the stage? What was it like hanging out with her and the band?**

Well, she was like one of the fellas. She had been in Billy Eckstine's band hanging out with the guys. She just thought she was one of the guys. So that's the way she treated us. We were very compatible, the whole trio. She was just like one of the guys.

**She was a good friend?**

Yeah.

**Tell us about the musicians in the band. First, Carl Schroeder.**

Yeah, well, Carl was an unusual guy. He didn't really start to play piano until he was in the Army, and he was about 22 years old or something.

**He was a young guy in the band?**

I'm talking about when he went to the Army, instead of having him do what Army folks wanted him to do, he told them he was a musician. And he wasn't. So then he had to start to try to learn how to play the piano.

**He really remembers that period of his life — playing with Sarah — with great fondness. It was very special for him.**

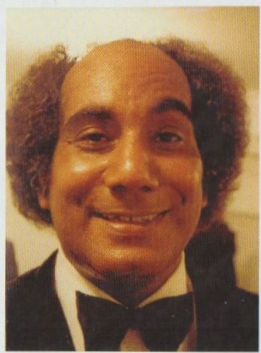
He loved her.

**And he loved you guys, working with you. He said some really great things about that.**

He was all right with us. He was a very talented guy to accomplish all he did in the time that he did it in. Yeah, he's a beautiful guy.







Walter Booker



Jimmy Cobb and Walter Booker



Jimmy Cobb and Walter Booker

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY  
OF CARL SCHROEDER

So he was pretty much the musical director in the band, right? So you guys worked closely?

Yeah.

**Bassist Walter Booker; you were close friends. It was a musical relationship that went on for many years, in this group and others.**

Well, Walter Booker was like, we were from the same place, you know, Washington D.C. And I never knew that when I was buying my drums...I was working in a pharmacy where my mother was like a short-order cook. They had a fountain, that served you food. So she got me a job so that I could buy some drums. And actually I found out later after meeting Booker that he lived about four or five blocks from there. And when he was a kid, he used to come into the pharmacy. I never knew that. We had a discussion about that one time and he said, "Yeah, I used to through there a lot." So then we got together. He had a place here in New York where he made a studio, like a recording studio in his apartment. So people used to come by and make tapes and things and hang out in his apartment. For a lot of years he had it there. I used to come down with my wife; my wife and I used to come down with him, because we made tapes. And I knew him like that. He was a good friend of mine and I knew his family. I remember, one time I met his father in Memphis. I had gone there to play the college one night with Benny Goodman's band and coming back the next morning, I saw Bookie – we called him Bookie – Bookie's father coming through the train station, making the transfer to come back to New York. So he was talking to me and he said, "Well, who you here with?" And I said, "I'm here with Benny Goodman." And his face lit up because he was trying to be a clarinet player while he was growing up. So he said, "Introduce me to him." So I introduced him to Benny and he talked with Benny like that on the fly. So his daddy and I got real tight; I got tight with the whole family. I knew his sister and his wife.

**You guys did a lot of touring: Europe, Japan, all over the States. Do you have any memories about being on the road with Sarah?**

Well, we always hung out. We hung out a lot together. 'Cause that's just the nature of being friends. And I even introduced her to one of her boyfriends. That's how it was. This guy, Marshall Fisher, came to me once in Las Vegas and said, "I've been listening to Sarah all my life and I'd like to meet her." And I said, "OK, that ain't no biggie. Come on and I'll introduce you to her." So I took her over and introduced them and she wound up taking him to Beverly Hills!<sup>1</sup> So that's that! [LAUGH]

**I guess it worked out between the two of them, but I know that unfortunately he had some health issues. He passed away, I believe from cancer.**

Yes.

**You've listened to the music. Are there any particular songs that feel extra special to you?**

One thing that was special happened one time when Sarah was singing "Poor Butterfly." A little girl came up and hugged her around her waist, almost through the whole song. That's how thrilled she was about it. She wouldn't turn her loose. And I just loved Sarah because she was a musician. She played good piano and she had a lot of voice. A lot of things she could do, man, the hair would stand up on my neck every time she would sing out there. That's how good she was to me.

**How about "Sarah's Blues?" That was often the part of the set where you guys would stretch out and each get a solo. We've got a really great version of it here and you take a solo on it. Do you have any memories of playing that song together and what it meant?**

<sup>1</sup> Although Marshall Fisher was sometimes referred to as Vaughan's husband, they were never legally married. [Course, Lesley Sassy: *The Life of Sarah Vaughan*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1993. p. 137]

That just meant she wanted to show off her trio, you know? She just called us . . . she said, "That's my trio." [LAUGHS] So she would give us things like that because when she was singing, we were keeping ourselves in the background; we were accompanying her. So she'd give us a chance to stretch on tunes like that and that would be our time to do something more up-front. So that's what it was.

**Do you have any final thoughts on the great Sarah Vaughan and the legacy that she's left on this music?**

Well, I can't see anybody walking in her shoes anytime soon. There is a Sarah Vaughan honors thing that they do at New Jersey Performing Arts Center.

**The vocal competition.**

Yeah, the Sarah Vaughan vocal competition. And they do it every year. So they honor her and I think they might have a street named after her over there, I'm not sure. So they really respect her and honor her a lot over there. And I do too.

**Zak, is there anything you'd like to ask?**

**ZAK SHELBY-SZYSZKO: I'm a huge fan of Dinah Washington and Sarah. How was it different playing with those two women? Was Dinah doing more blues-based stuff?**

Yeah, she was more like . . . They're both from gospel, but Dinah was more blues than Sarah. But Sarah was a little . . . her mother was singing in the church too, I think. And Dinah was coming from Mahalia Jackson and those kinda people. So there's a direct difference. One was more religious than the other, seems to me.

WITH PROJECT ASSISTANT ZAK SHELBY-SZYSZKO



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## The Greatest: A Conversation with Helen Merrill

**Zev Feldman: When was the first time you heard Sarah Vaughan? What were your early impressions of her?**

Helen Merrill: I remember it very well. I was sitting in a pizza place and suddenly on the radio comes this voice. And she was singing "Signing Off," that's Leonard Feather's tune. I couldn't believe it. I said, "Oh, that's exactly what my kind of singer has to sound like," 'cause she had all the musicianly things and all the be-bop things and everything in tune and the time was wonderful. So I became a fan immediately.

**Do you remember when that was?**

I was still in high school, so it was quite a while ago. In the '40s, I guess.

**You both were on EmArcy Records at the same time and you both had recorded self-titled albums a year apart of each other—approximately in 1954-1955—with Clifford Brown.**

I think Dinah Washington was on that too? Wasn't she?

**Exactly—the three of you. What it was like recording on EmArcy with Bob Shad?**

First of all, it was my first professional recording experience, aside from the thing I did with Earl Hines.<sup>2</sup> Bob Shad actually listened to musicians, so the way he came to me was through Benny Green, the trombone player. And Benny called Bob and said you have to record Helen. Quincy said the same thing. In those days Bob would listen to the opinions of musicians because they knew who the up-and-coming and best musicians were. So that's how I recorded—through Bob and Quincy. And I was very shy. I could never audition. I've never auditioned in my life, actually. So it was amazing for me to be with those people.



Quincy chose the band except for a couple of people.

**What would you say your relationship was like with Sarah as label-mates there over the years?**

My relationship with her was very respectful and Sarah was . . . Sarah was Sarah. I mean, she was the queen. She was marvelous. There was a lot of respect between Sarah and myself. We were both very nice to one another.

**Let's go back a second a talk about Quincy Jones. You and Sarah both worked with the iconic arranger and producer. What was it like working with him and what do you think he was able to bring out in you and Sarah?**

First of all, I knew Quincy before he was Quincy. I knew him when he was living in an apartment with his first wife and daughter and they lived in the basement of a brownstone. We all knew Quincy was very talented. However, that he had business talent and that kind of magical ability, we did not know. Quincy . . . he has a touch. He just has a touch, so that if he takes you under his wing, you just become well known. He just knows what to do with people. And he knew what to do with me, and certainly Sarah.

**Do you think there was something about his work with singers versus instrumentalists? Did he have a different approach?**

No. Not with me, because I was considered a kind of musician's singer. So was Sarah. So there was no compromise. Nothing except musicianship was involved and that's why Quincy was interested.

**You did a before-and-after test of various singers in 2010 and Sarah was one of the selections. You knew it was Sarah, of course. And you talked about her phrasing and improvisation being perfect.**

When Sarah sang, she might just as well have been a trumpet player playing. Her musical ability, her jazz phrasing . . . it was perfect. She had pipes that wouldn't quit, I mean, she had vocal chords that were amazing. So she could really do whatever she wanted to with them. I think she was just an amazing singer. That's how I felt about Sarah. And I think everybody that knows anything about jazz music feels that way about her.

**Did you remember what it was like for a jazz singer to perform in clubs back in the '70s?**

That was hard. In fact, I left America in the '60s. I went to London with Leonard Feather and his family. I had my son with me. From then on, I remained in Europe pretty much. The atmosphere was a lot nicer. Better than the martinis and the cigarettes, I can tell you that. And that's what you faced all the time in jazz clubs here. Now, of course, it's quite different. But then it was not. It was horrible.

**How did the jazz scene for jazz singers like you and Sarah change between the 1950s and 1970s would you say?**

Well, in my case, like I said, I left this country and I did a lot of work in Europe. But Sarah . . . Sarah was so talented. She just kept going on and on. I don't think that being a pop singer making lots of money really interested her at all. Making a living interested her, as it does with all of us, but she was so into music. And she was so wonderful. She just kept getting better and better. However, she never became a household name with the public, despite our knowing so much about her. I think it came from her need to be a musician first. And for that, she was amazing. She's just amazing. She's just amazing.

**It's been over 25 years since we lost her.**

I can't believe it.

## What did we lose 25 years ago that we'll likely never see again?

Well, the greatest singer. I will never hear a singer so musically. Her improvisations were so tasty. Her pitch was fabulous. She didn't use a vibrato much—not until she got older anyway. Then she started to fool around with it. I always liked the straight tones, myself. But what she did with it was just perfect. She will never be replaced. And she shouldn't be. Billie Holiday won't either, you know. People with a message of their own usually hang around a long time. If they're good. If they're good—and Sarah was more than good. In fact, you couldn't even say good with Sarah. She was divine.

HELEN MERRILL WAS INTERVIEWED BY PRODUCER ZEV FELDMAN ON JULY 29, 2015

- 1 "Signing Off" by Leonard Feather, recorded December 31, 1944 by Sarah Vaughan and Her All Stars featuring Dizzy Gillespie, Leonard Feather, Georgie Auld, et al., produced by Leonard Feather for Continental Records, New York City.
- 2 1952 "A Cigarette For Company" with Earl Hines. Originally released on the D'Oro label.

## disc one

1. I'LL REMEMBER APRIL (3:45)  
de Paul-Johnston-Raye (Hub Music Co. Inc./RYTVOG, Inc./Universal Music Corp., ASCAP)
2. I FALL IN LOVE TOO EASILY (3:43)  
J. Slyne-S. Cahn (EMI Feist Catalog, Inc./Music Publishing Co. of America, ASCAP)
3. BAND INTRO (2:55)
4. EAST OF THE SUN (AND WEST OF THE MOON) (3:09)  
Brooks Bowman (Anne Rachel Music Corp., ASCAP)
5. A LOT OF LIVIN' TO DO (2:14)  
C. Strouse-L. Adams (WB Music Corp./Strada Music Co., ASCAP)
6. TIME AFTER TIME (3:46)  
J. Slyne-S. Cahn (Sands Music Corp., ASCAP)
7. SOMEBODY LOVES ME (2:06)  
De Sylva-Gershwin-MacDonald (Ballentine Stephen Music Publ. Co./New World Music Co. Ltd., ASCAP)
8. POOR BUTTERFLY (4:58)  
R. Hubbell-J. Golden (Harms, Inc./WB, Inc., ASCAP)
9. A-TISKET A-TASKET (1:47)  
E. Fitzgerald-A. Van (EMI Robbins Catalog, Inc., ASCAP)
10. SEND IN THE CLOWNS (6:00)  
Stephen Sondheim (Revelation Music Publishing Corp./Riling Music, Inc., ASCAP)
11. SARAH'S BLUES (7:47)  
Vaughan-Schroeder-Booker-Cobb

## disc two

1. THE MAN I LOVE [4:45]  
G. Gershwin-I. Gershwin [New World Music Co. Ltd., ASCAP]
2. I GOT IT BAD [AND THAT AIN'T GOOD] [5:12]  
D. Ellington-P. Webster [EMI Robbins Catalog, Inc./Webster Music Co., ASCAP]
3. WATCH WHAT HAPPENS [2:44]  
Legrand-Demy-Gimbel [Gimbel Music Group/Universal Songs of Polygram International, Inc., ASCAP BMI, SACEM]
4. IF YOU WENT AWAY (PRECISO APRENDER A SER SÓ) [5:40]  
Gilbert-Valle-Sergio [Panema Music Corp./Ritcali Music Co., ASCAP]
5. I COULD WRITE A BOOK [3:01]  
R. Rodgers-L. Hart [Lorenz Hart Publishing Co./Williamson Music Co., ASCAP]
6. I REMEMBER YOU [5:02]  
V. Schertzinger-J. Mercer [Sony ATV Harmony, ASCAP]
7. FASCINATING RHYTHM [4:01]  
G. Gershwin-I. Gershwin [New World Music Co. Ltd., ASCAP]
8. EVERYTHING MUST CHANGE [6:47]  
Bernard Ighner [Almo Music Corp., ASCAP]
9. LIKE SOMEONE IN LOVE [2:41]  
J. Burke-J. Van Heusen [Bourne Co./Music Sales Corp., ASCAP]
10. MY FUNNY VALENTINE [5:17]  
R. Rodgers-L. Hart [Chappell Co./Williamson Music Co., ASCAP]
11. ENDING THEME [1:08]



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# SARAH VAUGHAN

disc one

LIVE at *Sweet's*

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2. I FALL IN LOVE TOO EASILY (3:43)
3. BAND INTRO (1:30)
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# SARAH VAUGHAN

disc two

LIVE at *Sweet's*

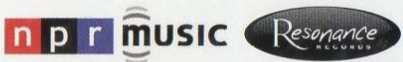
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# SARAH VAUGHAN LIVE AT ROSY'S

RECORDED LIVE AT ROSY'S JAZZ CLUB  
NEW ORLEANS, MAY 31, 1978

SARAH VAUGHAN *vocals*  
CARL SCHROEDER *piano*  
WALTER BOOKER *bass*  
JIMMY COBB *drums*



Produced by ZEV FELDMAN  
Executive Producer: GEORGE KLABIN



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SARAH VAUGHAN LIVE at Rosy's

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