



*Picture in Black and White*  
Tessa Souter (NOA)  
by Ken Dryden

Tessa Souter has made an impact with her stylistically wide-ranging recordings, avoiding artificial boundaries in her selection of music. She puts

her stamp on everything she explores, along with showcasing her songwriting gifts.

*Picture in Black and White* is a portrait of her diverse ancestry, beginning with the haunting “Kothbiro”, sung as a one-woman choir through overdubbing, beautifully supported by Adam Platt’s piano, Yasushi Nakamura’s arco bass and Dana Leong’s pizzicato cello. Her emotional treatment of McCoy Tyner’s “Contemplation” (retitled “Ancestors”, with Vicki Burns’ inspired lyric) is a logical segue. The first of many surprises is her choice of the ‘60s pop song “A Taste Of Honey”, which delivers a powerful impact with minimal accompaniment. Souter’s adventurous spirit continues as she blends Terry Callier’s ethereal “Dancing Girl” with U2’s “Where The Streets Have No Name” in a dramatic medley, which will open the ears of more than a few jazz fans.

It is easy to understand why Wayne Shorter approved Souter’s lyrics to his “Ana Maria”—the poetry and message perfectly fit this jazz standard. Her original title track is a love song to her father, whom she didn’t meet until she was in her late 20s; its hushed tone conveys the love she felt though he was only briefly in her life. Souter stretches herself with a stunning performance of Ornette Coleman’s “Lonely Woman” (with a lyric by Margo Guryan), negotiating its dissonant twists with ease and well supported by Nakamura and drummer Billy Drummond.

Souter wraps the session with a forward-looking treatment of Milton Nascimento’s “Nothing Will Be As It Was”. Rarely do vocal CDs leave such a strong impact after a single hearing. This is an easy choice for the top vocal jazz CD of 2018.

*For more information, visit [tessasouter.com](http://tessasouter.com). This project is at Mezzrow Jan. 8th and 55Bar Jan. 11th. See Calendar.*