

NEWS

Tessa Souter

Picture In Black
And White

NOA Records ★★★★★

Tessa Souter (v), Yotam Silberstein (g, oud), Adam Platt (p), Dana Leong (clo), Yasushi Nakamura (b), Billy Drummond (d) and Keita Ogawa (perc). Rec. date not stated

As you might expect from a protégé of the late, great Mark Murphy, the London-born, New York-based vocalist Tessa Souter is an artist who likes to take risks – both with her material and her delivery. Whether singing impressively stacked up harmonies in Dholuo on ‘Kothbiro’, penning new lyrics to Wayne Shorter’s ‘Ana Maria’ (from his 1975 album *Native Dancer*), or fusing ‘Dancing Girl’ with ‘Where the Streets Have No Name’ – Terry Callier in the embrace of U2 – Souter’s expressive warmth, impassioned eloquence and unfailingly beautiful timbre are an ever-present backdrop to this singularly powerful collection. Acting as the album’s emotional centre of gravity, the intensely moving title-track encapsulates its initial seed – the discovery at age 28 that her birth father was black and from Trinidad, not white and from Spain as she’d been told (“The song of you still sings in me, the sad and lonely melody, of all you were and never were to me”). There’s also a great take on the foxy rake, ‘Reynardine’, the oft-recorded seduction ballad which Souter again makes entirely her own, plus fearless accounts of McCoy Tyner’s majestic ‘Contemplation’ (from his classic 1967 Blue Note album, *The Real McCoy*), with lyrics by Vicki Burns, plus Jon Lucien’s captivating ‘Child of Love’. Enthusiasts of vocal jazz will find it impossible not to be transfixed by the inventiveness and potency of Souter’s artistry. **Peter Quinn**

