



By Chris Parker



Biographical accounts of singer Tessa Souter always bristle with hyphens (London-born, New York-based, Anglo-Trinidadian), but perhaps the most significant one lies between 'award' and 'winning'.

While her world-citizen status does seem to have opened her ears to a refreshingly wide variety of musical styles (on this album she performs strikingly original versions of two songs from her English teens, the Bruce/Brown Cream classic 'White Room' and the Beatles' 'Eleanor Rigby'; pays homage to Brazilian

music via Milton Nascimento's 'Empty Faces [Vera Cruz]' and 'Make This City Ours Tonight'; and explores the classic jazz that informs her unaffected but peerless vocal artistry by addressing Freddie Hubbard's 'Little Sunflower' with self-penned lyrics and Kenny Barron's 'Sunshower' with lyrics by fellow singer Teri Roiger), Souter – as the subtlety and cogency of her own songs amply demonstrates – is centred by the sheer skill and artistry with which she imbues everything she sings.

At once unassumingly virtuosic and uncontrivedly emotional, the Souter voice is simply one of the most attractive sounds in contemporary vocal jazz, and her musical rapport with guitarist Jason Ennis, bassist Gary Wang and drummer Conor Meehan, violinist Todd Reynolds, accordionist Victor Prieto and backing vocalist Ansel Matthews is exemplary. Warmly recommended.