

KENDRA SHANK

A SPIRIT FREE
ABBEY LINCOLN
SONGBOOK



CHALLENGE
RECORDS



"KENDRA SHANK IS AN ORIGINAL. A SINGER WITH A SOUND."

—Abbey Lincoln

"KENDRA SHANK'S DELECTABLE VOICE—WARM-TONED, FINE-GRAINED, QUIETLY SEXY—SETS HER WELL APART FROM THE CROWD..."

—Terry Teachout, TIME

"SHE HAS HER OWN SENSUOUS WAY OF PHRASING, STRETCHING TIME TO SUIT HER TASTE, A LITHE VOICE, AND A KNOWING REPERTOIRE."

—Gary Giddins, VILLAGE VOICE



BIOGRAPHY

Kendra Shank's crystal-pure tone, powerful musicianship and elastic phrasing have won her rave critical notices and fans internationally. Considered "one of the most innovative of present-day jazz vocalists" (Drew Wheeler, *CDNow*) and "one of the top jazz singers around today" (Scott Yanow, *L.A. Jazz Scene*), she headlines in clubs and festivals across the U.S. and abroad, captivating audiences with her genuine warmth, emotional depth, and musicality.

Originally a folk/pop singer/guitarist based in Seattle, Kendra Shank comes to performance naturally. Born in California to a playwright father and actress mother, Kendra was acting in plays at age 5, picked up the guitar at 13, and at 19 began her professional music career. Jazz, however, came later. During a 1988 residency in Paris, the influence of jazz artists grew, especially Billie Holiday.

In 1989 Shank began studying with jazz vocalist **Jay Clayton** in Seattle, while keeping dual residency in Paris where she gigged in jazz clubs. Her jazz career blossomed quickly and in

1991 she was hired by **Bob Dorough** as vocalist/guitarist/percussionist for his U.S. west coast tour. She soon caught the attention of jazz legend **Shirley Horn**, who co-produced Shank's critically-acclaimed debut compact disc, *Afterglow* (Mapleshade, 1994), featuring pianist **Larry Willis** and saxophonist **Gary Bartz**, and invited Kendra to perform as her guest at the **Village Vanguard** in New York.

Ms. Shank relocated to New York in 1997 and recorded two albums for Jazz Focus Records, *Wish* (1998) and *Reflections* (2000), which climbed the jazz radio charts and won "Top Ten Album of the Year" awards in *Jazziz*, *Newsday*, and *The Boston Globe*. "This vocalist makes lyrics believable, invents like an instrumentalist, and has an ear second to none for little-known and unknown tunes," wrote the *Globe's* Bob Blumenthal. Shank combines jazz originals, standards, French songs, folk/pop tunes, and open improvisation in an adventurous, genre-bending style that inspired **Abbey Lincoln** to call her "an original; a singer with a sound." In addition to her recordings as a leader, Kendra was guest guitarist on

Abbey Lincoln's CD *Over The Years* (Verve), sang vocalise lines on **Peter Leitch's** *Blues On the Corner* CD (Reservoir), and has performed live with **Jay Clayton**. She has been featured on National Public Radio's *JazzSet* and *Piano Jazz with Marian McPartland*, and was recognized among "Talent Deserving Wider Recognition" in the 1999 *Down Beat International Critics Poll*. Shank's current group, formed in 1999 and featured on her *Reflections* CD, includes pianist **Frank Kimbrough**, bassist **Dean Johnson**, and drummer **Tony Moreno**. This ensemble, in which Shank focuses on improvisational group interplay, is also featured on her newest album, *A Spirit Free: Abbey Lincoln Songbook*. The new CD will be released by Challenge Records in February 2007 and includes special guests **Billy Drewes** (tenor & soprano sax, bass clarinet, percussion), **Ben Monder** (guitar) and **Gary Versace** (accordion).

SELECTED PRESS

"...striking...her musicianship is powerful."

–Nat Hentoff, WALL STREET JOURNAL

"Kendra Shank's delectable voice—warm-toned, fine-grained, quietly sexy—sets her well apart from the crowd, as does her knack for picking unhackneyed, slightly off-center material. The up-tempo tunes swing hard; the ballads shimmer and shine. Get in on the ground floor: this lady is going up."

–Terry Teachout, TIME

"...she takes the old folkie "Black Is the Color of My True Love's Hair" and gradually whips it into a Coltrane-esque emotional frenzy. ...Shank is supremely talented, innovative and at the same time readily accessible. There's no one else quite like her."

–Will Friedwald, VILLAGE VOICE

"This vocalist makes lyrics believable, invents like an instrumentalist, and has an ear second to none for little-known and unknown tunes. ...She also functions like a true equal with her excellent rhythm section..."

–Bob Blumenthal, BOSTON GLOBE (Top 10 CD)

"Kendra Shank sounds like sunlight shining through a stained-glass window, her crystalline tone illuminating each song. Working her voice like a horn, she phrases inventively, whether crisp and sizzling or sensuously smoky. She's definitely an original."

–Patricia Myers, JAZZ TIMES

"One of the most probing and inspired romanticists in jazz."

–Gene Seymour, NEWSDAY (Top 10 CD)

"Kendra Shank is an original. A singer with a sound." **–Abbey Lincoln**

(**½) "The penetrating-voiced, modern-minded Shank breathes life into an impressive breadth of material."

–Zan Stewart, DOWN BEAT (3½ stars)

(****) "The precociously talented Kendra Shank is among the best of the great young jazz vocalists to emerge in the 1990's. 'Wish' is a multigeneric masterpiece."

–John Swenson, ROLLING STONE JAZZ & BLUES ALBUM GUIDE (5 stars, top rating)

"...a standout...improvisationally compelling...Her renderings of songs often took a reconstructive path, as she disassembled phrases, then reassembled them in her own imaginative fashion...the results were remarkable—the original flow of words and music still present, but recast into a form that brought new illumination to the story and the song."

–Don Heckman, LOS ANGELES TIMES

"...uniquely seductive and captivating: her voice envelopes you like cool, soft sheets."

–Marc Fisher, WASHINGTON POST

"...she intoxicates with a combination of power and perfume."

–Neil Tesser, CHICAGO READER

"A musician among musicians, Shank treats her voice like another instrument in the band rather than as its centerpiece."

–Jason West, SEATTLE WEEKLY

"Ms. Shank convincingly struts her stuff from the very first tune...reharmonizing and reconfiguring the contours of the composition with a shape-shifting scat-and-stop dynamic reminiscent of Betty Carter."

–John Stevenson, EJAZZNEWS.COM

INTERNATIONAL PRESS QUOTES

“Kendra Shank n’imite pas, et ne tire pas la couverture à elle. Elle s’applique à chanter, à être un instrument de plus dans un orchestre de jazz. C’est original, c’est sincère, ça vient des tripes avec juste ce qu’il faut de sophistication.” **–Michel Bedin, JAZZ HOT** (France)

"Kendra a fait vivre le jazz d'une façon aérienne. Elle *était* la musique."
–Clarisse Roussel, TOULON-ACTUALITÉ (Toulon, France)

“Des instants secrets venus du tréfonds de l’artiste se tiennent sur le bord fragile de sa voix jusqu’à la rupture vers le souffle. Une passion retenue la hante et la brûle, puis elle explose brutalement sur un rythme rapide, pour mourir parfois sur des cris divers. ...Elle aime créer un climat, peindre des tableaux de sons et des tableaux de sentiments. Ses couleurs sont sa voix, ses pinceaux la musique.”
–Serge Baudot, L’EVASION (Toulon, France)

“...un style épuré fait à la fois de force et de fragilité. Sa voix est chaude, douce avec pourtant un grain qui décale des voix ordinaires. Elle s’insinue en vous et plus vous l’écoutez plus vous avez besoin de l’écouter.”
–Serge Baudot, JAZZ HOT (France)

“...une fraîche simplicité: le talent sans les strass. ...Un jazz brodé main où les classiques s’éclairent d’émotion, ou la bossa coule son vent gai, et où la poésie court comme une eau...”
–Hélène Rabu, OUEST FRANCE (Nantes, France)

“Haciendo sonar sus notas como en una balada de Miles Davis, a veces delante de la percusión o bien detrás de ella, pero siempre de maravilla, la dulcísima voz, con ese halo lleno de vigor de Kendra Shank nos lleva desde “Prelude To A Kiss” a “Don’t Get Around Much Anymore,” en principio una secuencia ilógica de combinar. Pero su forma intuitiva y personal de frasear, hacen que el trabajo resulte excelente y es que realmente el estilo de Kendra puede rasgarnos el corazón en un momento. Si se pudiese embotellar su valía dejaría fuera del mercado al mismísimo Chanel No. 5. Y es que, al verla actuar, te das cuenta enseguida de que has sido testigo del nacimiento de una de las mejores voces del jazz.”
–Don Hillegas, CUADERNOS DE JAZZ (Spain)

“Bending the notes like a Miles Davis ballad solo, sometimes ahead of the beat, sometimes behind it, but always on the mark, Kendra Shank’s...wit, intuitive phrasing and just plain chops make...“Wish” a gem. If she could bottle her talent she’d put Chanel No. 5 out of business. If she landed on space station MIR she could keep it in orbit for another decade or two through the sheer energy of her presence.”
–Don Hillegas, CUADERNOS DE JAZZ (Spain)

“On every title she displays a sympathetic feeling for jazz phraseology and, above all else, she knows how to tell a story.”
–Barry McRae, JAZZ JOURNAL INTERNATIONAL (United Kingdom)

“She derails the themes quite beautifully (and) is ingeniously out of sync.”
–Barry McRae, JAZZ JOURNAL INTERNATIONAL (United Kingdom)

“Shank’s delivery is lithe, snappy, elastic and sensitive where need be.”
–THE EDMONTON JOURNAL (Edmonton, Canada)

“...clear, supple voice and sensuous phrasing.”
–THE EDMONTON JOURNAL (Edmonton, Canada)

“...beautiful...stark, haunting...brilliant...”
–Joseph Blake, VICTORIA TIMES COLONIST (Victoria, Canada)