

REVIEWS

NY TIMES – Utterly delightful...she works her way into listeners' hearts...her emotional range is wide...a joy to hear.
– Will Crutchfield

DOWNBEAT – Rondi Charleston is one of those rare artists for whom a song's meaning is as important as its melody. Her personal, thought-provoking, originals slow the heartbeat and raise the mental senses with a documentarian's acuity.
– Ken Micallef

HOT HOUSE – These are some of the most memorable new songs to come from a jazz singer since Abbey Lincoln. Charleston delivers vocal artistry at the highest level.
– George Kanzler

JAZZTIMES – Hers is an immense gift... the jazz equivalent of a gin and tonic: cool, clear, and effervescent with a deliciously subtle kick.
– Christopher Loudon

ART OF THE SONG – Rondi Charleston brings art to life. Her song writing, and interpretation of classics illuminates the power of music and story. She moved and inspired us as interviewers, with a journalist's ability to get to the truth of the human condition, combined with an artist's sensibility to tell it from the heart.
– Viv Nesbitt

ICON – Singer/songwriter Rondi Charleston makes music that's close to jazz nirvana.

JAZZIZ – Not only sparkling, seasoned vocal chops, but impeccable taste as well.

BECK / SMITH HOLLYWOOD – Exquisite new album...Charleston is remarkable! Rondi Charleston has won rhapsodic praise from The New York Times, Downbeat and others as a songwriter with great storytelling gifts as well as for her plush voice. Small wonder her original work is en route to being used in a film.
– Marilyn Beck

JAZZINSIDE – Charleston is the epitome of today's contemporary singer, intelligent, multi-faceted, and dedicated. She radiates polish, poise and personality. Her vividly visual originals touch people where they live.
– Nora McCarthy

JAZZ POLICE – Her incisive storytelling is the resounding strength as is her ability to dive deep into the heart of the matter and bring each emotion to the surface.
– Andrea Canter

PACE REPORT – Rondi's stage presence and passion shows immediately in her live performance. Her music isn't industry driven but back to the basics of original, authentic material.
– Brian Pace

WINE & JAZZ – Charming, vocally gifted and powerfully poetic singer/songwriter, Rondi effortlessly blends heartfelt original material and covers chosen from a wide variety of genres.

IN TUNE Magazine – One of the best jazz vocalists as adept at writing as interpreting the works of others. Charleston, like her music, is a treasure.
– JS



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Rondi Charleston

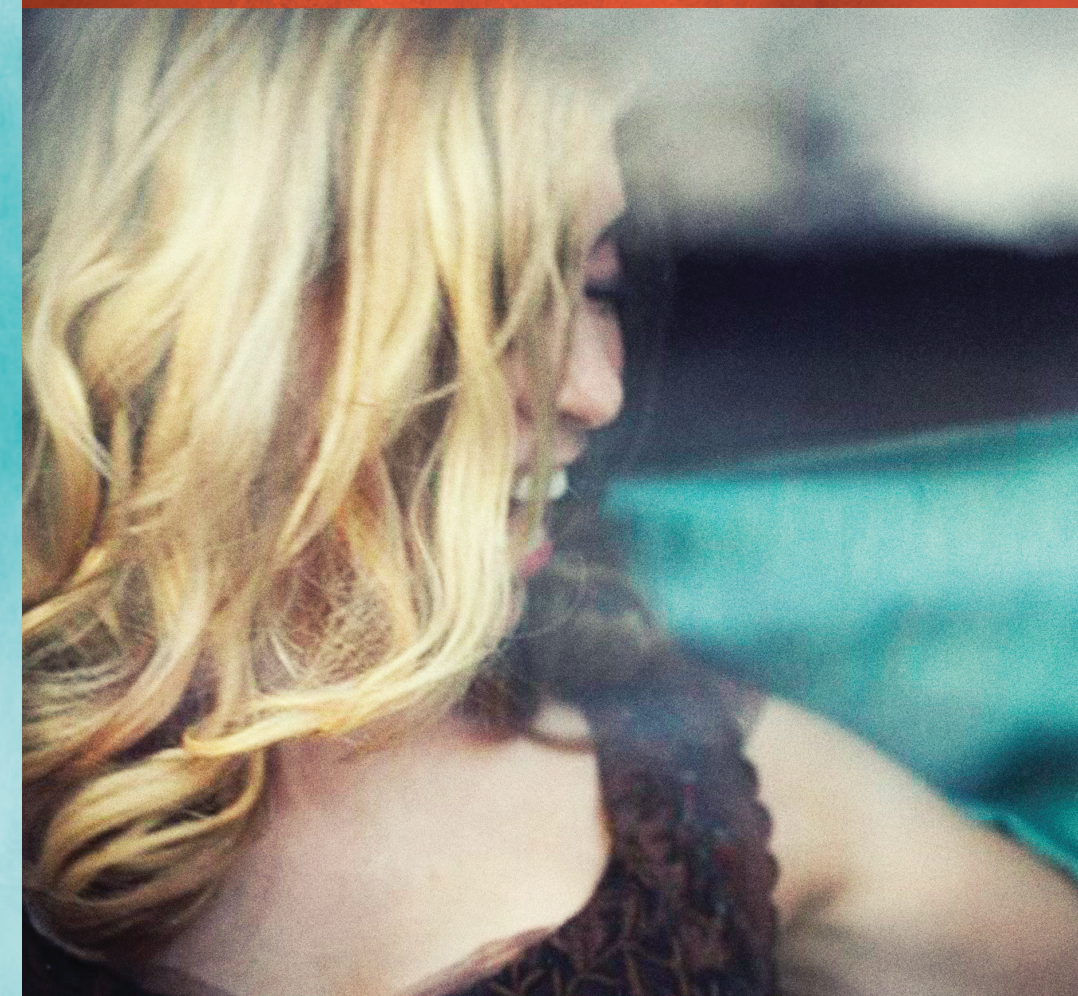


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MTM-111

» SIGNS OF LIFE



Photos by Brian Lovely • Hair / Make-Up by Richard Cooley • Written and Produced by Suzi Reynolds

RONDI CHARLESTON

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“Signs of Life burst through every note of this disc. Her five originals signal that Charleston is a serious songwriter with broad vision and lyrical skills to match. She seizes upon inspirations from science and nature, history and lived experience, while telling stories shaded with poetic precision.” Bob Blumenthal – Grammy Award Winning Journalist

Once in a while, something lifts us up out of our routine, takes us on a journey and drops us into someplace new and fascinating. Rondi Charleston’s newest release, **Signs of Life**, on Motéma Music, does just that. It is clear, particularly on the five new originals, that she has focused her internal creative world and demonstrates on this disc that she understands the relationship between contemplation and art. Rondi’s in the driver’s seat of her life, knows where she wants to go, and uses discipline and determination to get there, stopping often along the way to listen to her own inner voice.

“Some of the most memorable new songs from a jazz singer since Abbey Lincoln.”

Hot House Magazine

Even more compelling is how universally the stories her voice tells resonate with audiences and critics, as she explores her own deep connection to her ancestry on **DNA**, a song inspired by a family trip to meet relatives she’d only heard about in an autobiography written by her paternal great-grandmother. *“I had so much in common with my Norwegian family,”* Rondi recalls, *“not just physical characteristics but musicality and personality traits, and I started thinking about how genetics and environment affect us. Understanding my DNA allowed me to fully access my creative process. The song is basically a blues about that thirst we all have to understand who we are and why.”*

Rondi’s unusual background as a BM/MM Juilliard educated classical vocalist turned **Emmy** and **Peabody Award** winning TV producer and journalist, alongside her mentor and friend Diane Sawyer at ABC’s **Primetime Live**, fostered her love affair with language and research. *“All the while during lunch hours and evenings I kept singing at clubs in the village where Diane often came to see me. I’ll never forget her telling me, ‘I love working with you, but you’re really good and you should do this,’ so I finally made that commitment to devote myself to my music.”* Time spent there helped

develop a long-range vision and taught her how to distill the essence of what she sees and feels into a memorable melody and lyric.

Leaving TV for marriage, motherhood and a return to music brought new ideas and levels of awareness to her craft and an appreciation of the surprises everyday life can bring. *“In the dirt floor cellar of our 1844 home I found signs of life from another time; old horse-shoes, a rusty baby spoon, and tattered pages from the 1920’s New York Times each with a story to tell; and I realized each of us leaves our own imprint, and we should be mindful of what we leave behind.”* The seeds for **Signs of Life** were planted, and the title cut of this album and her *“auspicious debut as lyricist and composer”* blossomed with

“I try to seek out the magic in everyday experiences.”

Rondi Charleston

colorful metaphors, melody and harmonies, enhanced by the masterful accompaniment of internationally noted Swiss born harmonica player, **Gregoire Maret**, another unexpected but blissful surprise. Rondi adds, *“I try to surrender to the magic of each new experience. When we break free of our own self-imposed limitations, we can then see a myriad of possibilities.”*



Two more adventures sparked new originals. A hot air balloon ride over Napa Valley revealed an *“eye opening view of the world grappling with climate change,”* and a near death experience while white water rafting in Costa Rica with her family gave Rondi a newfound respect for *“the gifts second chances bring us to celebrate life”* in **How The River Flows**. The dramatic realizations gleaned from these two life-altering events fueled the necessity to inspire *“a merging of the collective consciousness”* through her lyrics and the music of her writing partner and Musical Director, noted jazz/blues guitarist, Dave Stryker. His surging melodies and 11/4 time signature on **The Wind Speaks** mirrored Rondi’s ‘out of her comfort zone’ experience, and informed her *“deeply personal and universally meaningful lyrics with impeccable imagery,”* as described by Bob Blumenthal in his profoundly insightful liner notes. Additional, carefully chosen standards from the archives of great jazz literature are compellingly re-imagined by Stryker; Wayne Shorter’s **Footprints**, Randy Weston’s **Babe’s Blues**, Paul Simon’s **Spirit Voices**, Thelonious Monk’s **Reflections**, Jobim’s **Chega de Suadage** along with writer Tynia Thommassie’s **In These Hours**, are all magnificently supported by a devoted and stellar ensemble

“Rondi is a person who knows truth in music. She’s smart, a terrific lyricist and a wonderful vocalist who brings great perspective, real wisdom and joy to our collaboration.”

Fred Hersch – Jazz Pianist, Composer and Five time Grammy Nominee

consisting of **Brandon McCune** on piano (Abbey Lincoln, Nnenna Freelon), **Ed Howard** on bass (Shirley Horn, Pat Metheny), **Clarence Penn** on drums (Michael Brecker, Christian McBride) and **Mayra Casales** on percussion (Tito Puente, Celia Cruz), and joined by selected sax performances from **Ted Nash** (Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra).

And if that were not enough, Charleston delivers a Bonus Track, **The Cave Knows**, co-written with piano giant and five time Grammy Nominee, **Fred Hersch**, composed for the closing credits of the soon to be released award-winning film, **No Place On Earth**. The film chronicles the story of Priest’s Grotto, a 77-mile system of caves in the Ukraine where 38 Jews survived for 17 months till the end of World War II. This amazing story brings this remarkable CD full circle, in an unpredictable twist of fate that can only be described as ‘B’shert,’ Yiddish for ‘meant to be.’ Revealed in the film is the genesis of the search for the cave’s inhabitants after an American ‘caver’ happened on relics found on its dirt floor; a baby’s cup, a rusty house key, a woman’s shoe... **Signs of Life**.



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