

Carolyn Lee Jones

Carolyn Lee Jones came to jazz through a path shaped by reinvention, curiosity, and a lifelong relationship with music. Raised in Nebraska, she was surrounded by music early on, but her first professional life led her to Dallas and into luxury retail, where she worked as a buyer and traveled widely. Those years sharpened the same instincts that would later inform her work as a vocalist: taste, presentation, attention to detail, and an appreciation for style that feels both classic and personal.

Jones stepped fully into music in 2008, building what she has described as her “second act” into a focused and steadily evolving career. Her vocal identity reflects the influence of classic nightclub singers of the 1950s and ’60s, but her approach is not nostalgic. She brings a contemporary sensibility to standards, vintage pop, cabaret material, Latin grooves, and lesser-known repertoire, making familiar songs feel newly considered and newer songs feel naturally rooted in the tradition.

Her development has been shaped by study, mentorship, and community. In New York, she connected with the late jazz singer and open mic host Trudi Mann, who introduced her to the cabaret-jazz scene and helped book Jones’ first show. She later studied classical voice privately in Dallas and continued her education through vocal jazz workshops, jazz conferences, and music theory study.

Across five previous albums, eight singles, and a wide range of live projects, Jones has established herself as a vocalist with a clear interpretive point of view. She has performed with Fresh Vintage Jazz Ensemble, Jones and Her Jazz Men, The Satin Dolls Band, and In Full Swing little big band, with repertoire spanning classic jazz, vintage pop, blues, Broadway, R&B, and original material.

Jones’ work has earned national and international attention, as well as recognition from the Sammons Center for the Arts, which named her Cabaret Artist of the Year in 2017. With ***Eklektika***, her sixth studio album on Catn’round Sound, she brings her “Fresh Vintage” identity into a newly focused setting: classic in sensibility, contemporary in approach, and deeply personal in repertoire.

With ***Eklektika***, Carolyn Lee Jones brings together a program shaped by standards, personal connections, Brazilian and Latin-leaning textures, original material from her extended musical circle, and songs that connect classic vocal jazz to a broader sense of style and storytelling. The title plays on the word “eclectic,” but the album is not simply a varied collection. Jones gives the recording continuity through phrasing, restraint, and the sense that each selection has been personally chosen.

The album opens with “**Skylark**,” reimagined with a gentle bossa nova feel and subtle R&B undercurrent. Joined by **Brad Williams** on keys, **Young Heo** on bass, **Roger Boykin** on guitar, and **Andrew Griffith** on drums, Jones places the familiar melody in a warmer rhythmic setting, allowing the standard to feel newly considered without losing its lyrical center.

On “**Detour Ahead**,” Jones turns toward the ballad tradition with intimacy and restraint. With **Willie Wrinkle** on bass alongside Williams and Griffith, the performance gives the song space to unfold without overstatement, emphasizing the lyric’s sense of hesitation, reflection, and emotional caution. The mood is direct and unhurried, centered on Jones’ ability to let the song speak without forcing its drama.

“**Take Me Where the Moon Lives**,” written by guitarist and songwriter Justin Allison, brings a buoyant swing feel into the program. Featuring **Mario Cruz** on saxophone, the track highlights Jones’ ease with narrative phrasing and her affinity for repertoire that feels both contemporary and connected to the vocal-jazz tradition. Its placement adds motion and lift after the reflective tone of “Detour Ahead.”

That personal connection continues with **Roger Boykin**, whose “**That’s What Being in Love Is All About**” was written more than 40 years ago and is newly realized here with Boykin himself featured on guitar. The performance adds another layer of local and musical history, drawing from Jones’ Dallas-area creative circle while keeping the sound relaxed, melodic, and conversational.

Jones pares the setting down for George and Ira Gershwin’s “**Embraceable You**,” presented simply with **Peter Rioux** on piano. The spare voice-and-piano arrangement places the focus on line, lyric, and tone, giving the standard a directness that reflects Jones’ classic nightclub sensibility: unhurried, intimate, and centered on the song itself.

With “**Out of Nowhere**,” she returns to an ensemble setting, joined by Rioux, **James Driscoll** on bass, Griffith on drums, and **Shelley Carroll** on saxophone. Jones’ arrangement places the rarely heard verse in an unexpected position, giving the standard a refreshed sense of movement while keeping its melodic identity intact. The track shows how subtle structural choices can make familiar repertoire feel newly shaped.



Michael Franks' "Tell Me All About It" appears here as a reprise from Jones' 2013 recording, with its bossa nova-tinged feel adding a relaxed rhythmic frame to the program. With **Jonathan Fisher** on bass, **Todd Parsnow** on guitar, **Jorge Ginorio** on percussion, and Carrol on saxophone, the track broadens the album's palette while connecting Jones' earlier recording history to her present musical voice.

One of the album's most personal entries is "Morning in Crown Heights," a collaboration connected to the late George Gagliardi. Built from a melody written decades earlier and completed with Jones' lyrics, the piece becomes a reflective centerpiece of the recording. Its narrative quality and personal origin ground the album's stylistic range in lived experience, giving the program one of its clearest emotional anchors.

The album closes with "Hearts Desire," by Alan Broadbent and Dave Frishberg, performed by Jones with longtime pianist Williams. Its intimate piano-and-voice setting brings the program back to the essentials of voice, lyric, and musical trust. After the varied textures that precede it, the closing track feels reflective rather than grand, ending the album with poise and clarity.

Across *Eklektika*, Jones creates a recording that feels carefully assembled rather than merely varied. Standards sit beside lesser-known songs, personal collaborations, Latin-inflected settings, ballads, and swinging material, unified by her sense of phrasing, taste, and musical identity.

"Jones attacks each song with the vigor of a wildcatter yet maintains a dusky undercurrent that drips with sensuality."

— **Jazz Times**

"This oxymoron, Fresh Vintage, quite accurately conveys the character of the vocalist's repertoire and the niche that she occupies on the jazz scene."

— **Jazz Quad Review Europe**

"Ms. Jones ... has such a warm and inviting voice along with her highly appealing jazz phrasing."

— **Scott Yanow, L.A. Jazz Scene**

1. "Skylark" — 4:00 Hoagy Carmichael / Johnny Mercer
Carolyn Lee Jones (v), Brad Williams (k), Young Heo (b), Roger Boykin (g), Andrew Griffith (d)
2. "Detour Ahead" — 5:14 Lou Carter / Herb Ellis / John Frigo
Carolyn Lee Jones (v), Brad Williams (p), Willie Wrinkle (b), Andrew Griffith (d)
3. "Take Me Where the Moon Lives" — 4:54 Justin Allison
Carolyn Lee Jones (v), Brad Williams (p), Willie Wrinkle (b), Mario Cruz (s), Andrew Griffith (d)
4. "That's What Being in Love Is All About" — 4:32 Roger Boykin
Carolyn Lee Jones (v), Brad Williams (k), Young Heo (b), Roger Boykin (g), Andrew Griffith (d)
5. "Embraceable You" — 4:31 George & Ira Gershwin
Carolyn Lee Jones (v), Peter Rioux (p)
6. "Out of Nowhere" — 4:20 Johnny Green / Edward Heyman
Carolyn Lee Jones (v), Peter Rioux (p), James Driscoll (b), Andrew Griffith (d), Shelley Carrol (s)
7. "Tell Me All About It (Reprise)" — 4:24 Michael Franks
Carolyn Lee Jones (v), Brad Williams (p), Jonathan Fisher (b), Andrew Griffith (d), Todd Parsnow (g), Shelley Carrol (s), Jorge Ginorio (perc)
8. "Morning in Crown Heights" — 5:51 George Gagliardi / Carolyn Lee Jones, George Gagliardi
Carolyn Lee Jones (v), Peter Rioux (p), James Driscoll (b), Andrew Griffith (d), Shelley Carrol (s)
9. "Hearts Desire" — 5:01 Alan Broadbent / Dave Frishberg
Carolyn Lee Jones (v), Brad Williams (p)

Carolyn Lee Jones — vocals
Brad Williams — piano / keys
Peter Rioux — piano
Jorge Ginorio — percussion
Willie Wrinkle — bass
Young Heo — bass
James Driscoll — bass
Jonathan Fisher — bass
Roger Boykin — guitar
Todd Parsnow — guitar
Andrew Griffith — drums
Shelley Carrol — saxophone
Mario Cruz — saxophone

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