

POLLY GIBBONS

2^xHD

ALL I CAN DO





Polly Gibbons, the rising young British singer of jazz, blues, and soul, has a sound and a style that give off sparks. Her voice is raspy, raw, and full of heat; it sputters and growls, carves out funky grooves, and wails into the stratosphere. Improvisations tumble out of her. Whatever the tempo, Polly's time and pitch are spot-on; no challenge throws her. And when she sings a quiet, sparsely arranged love song, she's a no-frills storyteller of great heart.

This album, made before a live audience at the Manhattan recording studio Power Station, captures the excitement she created throughout 2018, a promising year for her. That summer, Birdland gave Polly her own New York residency. She opened for Boz Scaggs at the Montreal Jazz Festival and played the Pittsburgh International Jazz Festival in the company of Gregory Porter, Marcus Miller, and Tootie Heath. Polly made continued appearances at London's preeminent jazz club, Ronnie Scott's, whose customers know her well. Her previous album on Resonance, *Is It Me ...?*, earned raves. Wrote Jon Sobel in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*: "I hear echoes of Ella, Lena, Aretha, even Janis. But Gibbons is a full-blown phenomenon of her own."

Her maestro, pianist James Pearson, is the right man for Polly; as artistic director and house bandleader at Ronnie Scott's, he knows how to play and arrange in many genres. The rest of the band, assembled by producer George Klabin (the founder of Resonance) and creative adviser Mary Ann Topper, reaches all over the musical map. Organist Shedrick Mitchell got his start in the St. Louis church run by his father, a Baptist bishop; he has since worked with Aretha Franklin, Jay-Z, and for nine years with Whitney Houston. Jazz guitarist Paul Bollenback draws upon fusion, funk, blues, and Indian rhythms and harmonies (he grew up partly in New Delhi). Drummer Mark McLean's range of skills is as broad as his credits, which include work with George Michael, Andy Bey, and the Backstreet Boys. Bassist Richie Goods leads a band, Nuclear Fusion, that

has been called “a generous slab of in-your-face funky jazz-rock.” James’s fellow pianist/arranger, Tamir Hendelman, has accompanied singers ranging from Barbra Streisand to Julia Migenes; he spent years with the Clayton-Hamilton Jazz Orchestra.

On this disc you’ll hear influences, but not imitation. Horace Silver wrote words and music for “Permit Me to Introduce You to Yourself,” and recorded it as a tambourine-shaking gospel tune. The version here combines funk, scatting, and churchy organ and piano. Singing about resolving inner conflict, Polly sounds as fervent as a revivalist on a soapbox. She calls Al Jarreau’s “Goodhands Tonight” a “sexy man song” that she had to “reframe a little bit,” she says: “I do sometimes want to hold men in a strong female way.” In “Beautiful Things,” a whimsical tune from the movie *Doctor Dolittle*, Leslie Bricusse urges us to take in the scenery before it’s too late. The ghost of George Shearing can be heard in James’s playing.

Ever since it first appeared on Quincy Jones’s 1974 album *Body Heat*, “Everything Must Change” has been sung emotively by jazz divas. Polly conveys its hard-earned wisdom with restraint, not histrionics. The revisionist take on “Anything Goes” was her idea. She got it while listening to the gospel-funk piano opening of Donny Hathaway’s “Jealous Guy,” a John Lennon cover. Polly and James wrote “If You Had the Chance,” a soul heartbreaker in a stark setting.

George Klabin introduced her to the rollicking, lowdown “Some of My Best Friends Are the Blues,” which he’d found on Della Reese’s 1967 album *Della on Strings of Blue*. “This Is Always” is a World War II-era love song that Chet Baker adopted in 1955. Polly included it, she says, “to have a nice, wistful, optimistic moment”—a crepuscular jazz trio, Shedrick at his gentlest, and her.

One day, she says, while “noodling about at the piano,” her mind drifted toward “the bad things in life,” most of them stemming from current politics on either side of the pond. The title “All I Can Do Is Sing the Blues” popped into her mind. James came up with the music and the shuffle rhythm, but Polly dreamed up the walking bass line.

The death of Prince moved her to revisit “Nothing Compares 2 U,” his great ballad of lost love. “I wanted to try and tell the story and have it be a bit more simple, just Shedrick and James laying it down.” The closer, “I Want a Little Sugar in My Bowl,” came to her through Nina Simone, who got it from Bessie Smith. Polly gives this unashamedly lewd blues a slow burn that smolders until it explodes; James takes it to church with an arrangement inspired by Mahalia Jackson records. Tamir Hendelman channels every style Polly loves into one of the most exciting solos on the album.

Call this music jazz if you want; but in Polly’s world, that term embraces any sound that’s soulful, swinging, and free.

— *James Gavin*

(James Gavin’s books include biographies of Chet Baker, Lena Horne, Peggy Lee, and (still to come) George Michael; he is a two-time winner of ASCAP’s Deems Taylor-Virgil Thomson Award for excellence in music journalism.)

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ALL I CAN DO

- 1 Permit Me to Introduce You to Yourself (H. Silver) *¹
- 2 Good Hands Tonight (A. Jarreau, G. Duke) *¹
- 3 Beautiful Things (L. Bricusse) **²
- 4 If You Had the Chance (Gibbons, Pearson) **²
- 5 Some of My Best Friends Are the Blues (A. Byron, W. Harris) *¹
- 6 Anything Goes (C. Porter) **²
- 7 This Is Always (M. Gordon, H. Warren) *¹
- 8 All I Can Do (Gibbons, Pearson) **²
- 9 Everything Must Change (B. Ighner) **²
- 10 I'm Just a Lucky So and So (D. Ellington, M. David) **²
- 11 Nothing Compares to You (Prince) **²
- 12 Sugar In My Bowl (C. Williams, D. Small, J. Brymn)*

★ Personnel

Vocals: Polly Gibbons

Piano: Tamir Hendelman* | James Pearson**

Hammond organ: Shedrick Mitchell

Guitar: Paul Bollenback | Bass: Richie Goods

Drums: Mark McLean

★ Arrangements

Tamir Hendelman¹ | James Pearson²

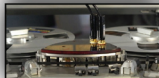
2xHD Mastering: RENÉ LAFLAMME

2xHD Executive Producer: ANDRÉ PERRY





THE 2xHD MASTERING PROCESS



The 2xHD proprietary mastering provides a unique listening experience as the process digs deep in original recordings to bring out all hidden information, without altering the music in any way, uncovering and bringing out nuances, warmth, depth of field and even the air around the musicians.

The 2xHD logo on an album cover indicates that the recording was carefully selected for the quality of its recording and interpretation and that the high resolution mastering was done using the 2xHD system. Created by producer/studio owner André Perry and prize-winning audiophile sound engineer René Laflamme, in collaboration with several high-end audio equipment manufacturers, the 2xHD music remastering system combines the best of vintage analog quality with state-of-the-art DSD and DXD digital technology – a '*Back to the Future*' approach. Each musical project is treated with individual attention to the choice of equipment.

Some of the top flight gear used in the process includes a selection of cutting-edge A/D and D/A converters to obtain the most natural DSD or PCM sound, such as a NAGRA-T tape recorder - modified with all tubes playback electronics (With its four direct drive motors and the tape sensor head, the NAGRA T is one of the best transports ever made), a modified vacuum tube NAGRA HD dac (DSD) to make it possible to obtain a real analog sound from a digital master and in some cases even battery power is used so as to benefit from the cleanest power source possible. The 2xHD FUSION mastering system is powered by super capacitor power supplies with new technology that lowers the digital noise which is found in the lowest levels, something that was not possible before. The resulting signal is then transformed into high resolution formats by recording it in DSD11.2kHz using Merging Technologies' Horus A to D converter, which is also powered by a super capacitor power supply. All analog and digital cables are the most state of the art available today. Also used in the process are Pyramix Masscore (records all high resolution formats, allowing for great flexibility), an Atomic Clock for re-clocking, and Siltech & Shunyata cables (all digital and analog cables are reduced to a minimum optimal length in the digital conversion and mastering system).

The particular open sound and feeling of having no ceiling to the music are obtained through the 2xHD high resolution transfer. In the case of an original analog master tapes, transfer to DSD 256. In the case of an original 96/24 or DXD/DSD master, transfer is made to analogue using cutting edge D/A converters.

2xHD is an accurate and musical mastering system, earning recognition from peers and from the specialized trade publications around the world.

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