



EDEN **ATWOOD**
Waves
The Bossa Nova Session



Finding Eden: A Singer's Journey

By Bill Kohlhaase

While the world is brimming with singers of talent and confidence, it's the rare vocalist who can actually get under our skins and stir our emotions. Eden Atwood is such a singer. Yes, she has a fine voice and skills to spare. But her work transcends simple competence with its honesty, sensitivity and conviction. In short, she speaks to us.

Where does such ability come from? In literature, it is said there are great writers and then there are great writers with great experience. In jazz, this experience is traditionally called "paying dues." But it takes more than experience to become the kind of artist who can touch our souls. It takes consideration of that experience, the long, hard thought of where one's been and where one's going, the kind of personal examination that the Greek philosophers suggested was necessary to make life worth living. In current parlance, self-realization.

I remember a conversation with Eden on a blustery afternoon in her beloved Montana in which she spoke in depth about the details of her life, her hopes and fears, her triumphs and disappointments. She had just left New York City and was looking to her future. I couldn't help but be impressed with her frankness. At the same time, I felt the vulnerability that such frankness implies. It struck me then that these were the same feelings she generates as she performs.

Eden explains that as a young girl she didn't start out wanting to be a singer: "I wanted to be a star, a big, huge star. An actress. I craved attention. I was infected by pop culture and loved everything about it: the drama, the make believe. I came to understand later that it was the escape from real life that I found so irresistible and freeing. My reality felt dismal and sad. I grew up feeling like I didn't belong anywhere. To be someone else was just fine with me."

Eden was born in Memphis, the daughter of jazz musician and arranger Hub Atwood, who later became a staff writer at Capitol Records in Los Angeles. Eden's parents divorced when Eden was still a pre-schooler. Her mother, Gus Miller, daughter of 'The Big Sky' author A.B. Guthrie, Jr., moved Eden to Montana. "I saw my father only during summers after that and like so many kids from split families I learned to adore him. I set him so high on a pedestal that he was unreachable. I now recognize that he had one of the classic jazz mentalities; funny and wry, charming as all get out, very laid back and covertly depressed. His career basically ended in the '60s when he became a jingle writer in Memphis. He was never happy again."

1. **He's A Carioca**
(A.C. Jobim, Gilbert) Ipanema Music Corp., ASCAP 6:59
2. **O Pato**
(Hendricks, Silva, Teixeira) Cromwell Music, ASCAP 4:59
3. **Meditation**
(A.C. Jobim, Gímbel, Mendonça) Universal Duchess Music, BMI 5:42
4. **Girl From Ipanema**
(A.C. Jobim, Gímbel, De Moraes) Universal Duchess Music, BMI 6:40
5. **Once Upon A Summertime**
(Baerli, LeGrand, Mercer, Ruauett) Universal MCA, ASCAP 6:06
6. **Don't You Know I Care**
(Ellington, Mack) Paramount Music, ASCAP 3:50
7. **Waves (Camino Cruzados)**
(music by A.C. Jobim, lyrics by Eden Atwood), Corcavado Music, BMI, In A Heartbeat Music, ASCAP 6:19
8. **Fool On The Hill**
(Lennon-McCartney) Comet Music, ASCAP 4:10
9. **How Deep Is The Ocean**
(I. Berlin) I. Berlin Music, ASCAP 5:29
10. **Brazil**
(Barroso, Russell) APRS Music, BMI 6:08
11. **It's A Quiet Thing**
(Ebb, Kander) Alley Music, BMI 4:31



In high school, Eden was diagnosed with Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome, a genetic disorder that meant she would never bear children. Doctors at the Mayo Clinic feared that the nature of her diagnosis (an XY genotype and an XX phenotype) would be too traumatic and a decision was made to withhold the truth from Eden only to have her step-mother reveal it to her a year later: This created a deep rift between Eden and her parents and fueled a tremendous rebellion and self-destructive streak. Eden left high school after her junior year and enrolled at the University of Montana in the drama department. Two years went by with Eden slipping in and out of depression. At the end of her second year, Eden received word that her father, his health failing, had shot himself, continuing a sad legacy that claimed the lives of Eden's paternal grandfather, uncle and cousin as well. Eden's father lingered before dying, and though initially discouraged by her mother, Eden flew to Mississippi, her father's home state, to see him. "I made it just in time to tell him I loved him and to sing him the only song of his he ever taught me, 'I Was the Last One to Know' (a song that Ann Richards had sung with the Kenton band). He died that night. I was devastated."

"The next several years were a blur," she explains. "I did everything I could to escape the emptiness I felt through any available means." A week after her father's funeral, Eden moved to Chicago and took a waitressing job at an Italian restaurant that featured the singer Rachel Lee. Lee graciously allowed the aspiring actress from Montana, no stranger to singing, to sit in with her trio. "When I was young my father would always be at the piano and he would teach me songs; 'I Can't Give You Anything But Love' and 'Melancholy Baby'. When I was around three my folks would take me to Shakey's Pizza Parlor where I could sit in with the Dixieland trio and sing 'Doodily Doo'.

Singing with Lee's trio was a revelation. "When I sang, I felt close to my father for the first time since he died. I also felt that all the feelings bottled up inside me had somewhere to go. That was it. I was no longer interested in being an actress. I wanted to sing. I wanted to do something for my father, something that would keep him alive. But I also knew that I needed it for me. Singing saved my life."

Though underage, Eden began hanging around Chicago's Green Mill club, waiting for a chance to sing, calling tunes her father had taught her. She had learned the basics while in high school by taking private jazz lessons from the respected musician Marcia Miget, who was then based in Montana. Her Chicago experiences made her realize there was more to learn and she enrolled in the American Conservatory of Music, but left after a semester to take a modeling job in Paris. Eden lived in New York City for a time working as an actress on a soap opera, but after a year, her unhappiness sent her back to Chicago and soon she was appearing

at the city's premier singer showcase as a four night a week headliner. "I was so young when I started full time at the Gold Star and I was very messed up about my father. I was very vulnerable and self destructive so I was easy prey for the club's owner. He was my father's age and very charismatic and I was eager to please." The club's owner pushed Eden into taking Vicodin, washing it down with Wild Turkey and then going onstage to vamp it up. While the audience loved it, to Eden it became misery. "At first the attention was addictive, but the musicians weren't digging me. About the first time Brad Williams, the pianist on the gig with me, said 'Yeah' after I sang a ballad I was no longer interested in playing a part." Eden lost some fans she had acquired after her decision to sing without the stage antics.

"I learned a great and horrible truth: the truest expression does not always garner the greatest admiration."

Then she heard singers Shirley Horn and Jimmy Scott. "After that, I wanted nothing more in the world than to be able to sing with as much truth and soul as Shirley and Jimmy. I began to realize that the kind of Jazz singing I was into is about knowing who you really are and revealing that without filter or artifice. Listening to Jimmy and learning about his life gave me something incredible, someone to look up to that had faced a myriad of difficulties in life, someone who still gets up onstage with so much dignity, honesty and, above all, courage. Jimmy inspires me."

When pianist Marian McPartland heard Eden's first self-produced CD, she liked it so much she forwarded it to Carl Jefferson at Concord Records. The result was Eden's four recordings for the label, efforts that brought her much notice but little self-satisfaction. "I felt none of the recordings came close to capturing what I was capable of or what was really inside me. I knew I had something to say but I didn't understand it fully enough yet myself and that's evident on those records."

With the Gold Star closed and her relationship with Concord at an end, Eden slipped back into depression. She couldn't escape thoughts of her father and began to wonder if she would come to the same end. Eden returned to Montana to be closer to her mother and took an acting job with the Montana Repertory Theatre, performing nostalgia material in a musical revue. She also began singing weekends at the local Holiday Inn with pianist Jodi Marshall to whom "A Quiet Thing" on this recording is dedicated). "At first it was very difficult because I felt my career was over and I was still so unhappy. But things started to change. In Chicago, I was used to the apathy of the crowds. But it was different in Montana. I started singing more freely and people started listening and even dancing, something that would have sent me over the edge back in Chicago. But I figured, to hell with it, I'm out of the business anyway, let 'em

dance and why not sing big and bold like I always wanted to but had been afraid to?"

In Missoula, Eden began working with at-risk and severely-emotionally-disturbed teens. The experience was a revelation. "I was good at it, but I felt like a fraud. I was telling those kids to be accountable for their choices and counseling them to feel their grief and then release it, something that I had not done fully for myself. I could see very clearly that these kids were just doing what they could to get their needs met and survive even when it was dysfunctional. Working with these kids helped me as much as it helped them. I began to see that I was just like them and then I started to see myself like I saw them, with love and compassion."

A chance to sing again came with the offer of a four-month job in Singapore. She went to New York after that but despite hearing a bounty of wonderful music, she returned to Montana. "I missed that feeling of community. I missed the openness and the feeling of truly belonging to a place." She joined with other Montana musicians to form The Last Best Band, a group that appears throughout the West.

This recording came about when GrooveNote Records owner Ying Tan heard Eden performing a bossa nova tune on Eden's friend Jeremy Monteiro's album and contacted her out of the blue. Pianist-arranger Bill Cunliffe, the Thelonious Monk International Piano Competition winner with a growing reputation as one of the jazz world's most inspired pianists (he also has a fine recording out on GrooveNote!) and a longtime acquaintance of Eden's, was enlisted to arrange and accompany. An ensemble of Los Angeles' best musicians joined the project. The title track, Waves, features a lyric by Eden and reflects the philosophy she has come to believe in. Says Eden, "I heard a Zen story once about two waves rolling along on the sea about to crash on the shoreline. The one wave is terrified that it will cease to exist and the other says, 'Don't forget, we are waves on the sea... waves of the sea.' That notion of oneness has been very comforting to me."

The results of this session, as you can hear, announce the arrival of an artist who has journeyed within her own psyche to discover the true path to her own and her listeners' hearts "While we were mixing 'A Quiet Thing,'" says Eden, "I cried. I cried during my other sessions, too, out of frustration for my own limitations and insecurity. But this time I cried because I finally felt that some of what I am actually capable of doing, right now, was on tape. In my heart I finally feel that I have done for my father what I've always wanted to do: continue his legacy and, in that, validate his life and work and all that he was and is to me. I did for him what I wanted to do. Now, I am doing it for me."

— Bill Kohlhaase has written about jazz for the Los Angeles Times, L.A. Weekly, Downbeat and other publications. He currently lives in Bozeman, Montana.





WAVES

When it seems that everything you know is so unsure
and Love can feel too far away for your heart to endure

Open your heart if you dare
and you will find that there is Love everywhere

Everything must change in time and those we love must leave
but don't let fear keep you from anything

Life is for living while you can
there is so much joy possible when you understand
that you need to love someone with all that's in your heart
then you will feel all the Love of which you are a part

Open your eyes and you will see
You are not alone and you will never be

When you learn to love someone with all that's in your heart
that love will stay inside you even when you have to part

Open your heart and let love in
You are not alone and you have never been

We are all Waves on the Sea
We are all Waves of the Sea

-Eden Atwood



Executive Producers: Ying Tan and Sebastian Koh

Produced by: Joe Harley

Engineered by: Michael C. Ross at Record One, Sherman Oaks, CA,
May 25-28, 2002

Assistant Engineer: Darrell Thorp

Mastering: David Glasser, Airshow Mastering using the Sony Direct
Stream Digital™ System

Microphones: Neumann M-249, M-50, U-47FET, U-67, AKG C-12,
C-12A, Sony C55p, Sennheiser 441, 421, Shure SM 7.

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Thank you to Bill, you made me want to sing; to Joe, Danek,
Anthony, Scott, Pete for the music and the vibe; to Joe
Harley for the talking, double doubles and the voice in the cans;
to Ying and Sebastian for finding me; to Nina for shopping and
girtalk; to Fleurine and Brad, for Caminhos Cruzados and for
little E. To Mike, Lon, Darrell, Bernie and Dave for making it
sound so good; to Terry for making me look good.

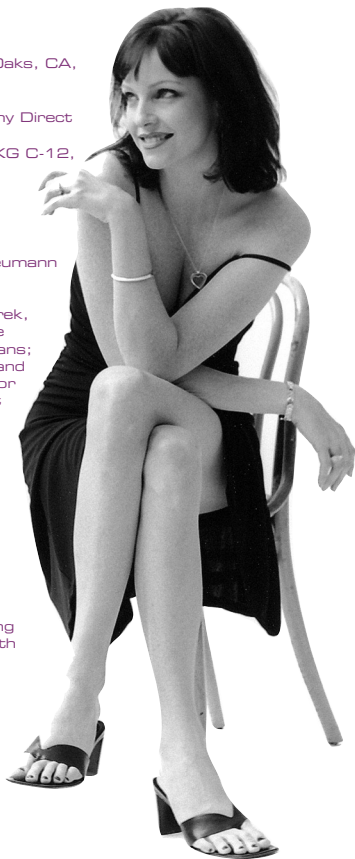
Special thanks to my family, those by birth and those by
friendship. You are in every part of this record.

Thank you to Bruce for...everything.

It's A Quiet Thing is dedicated to Jodie Marshall, a great
lady and a great piano player. Thank you for giving me this
song and for your belief in me.

Finally, I have been inspired by many singers. One person in
particular got into my soul and helped me to find my voice.
I owe a debt of gratitude to the great Jimmy Scott. Listening
to him for the first time gave me inspiration, hope and a path
to follow. Hearing him now feels like home.

Eden Atwood May 21, 2002



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