

CLIQUE

Patricia Barber



I discovered

Patricia Barber

in 1994 on *CAFÉ BLUE*, her third recording. I say "discovered" as if it was a rational act. But you don't really discover Patricia Barber. You get bitten by the bug. Barber messes with your mind and gets under your skin. Her audience is more like a cult than a fan base, although it is too large for a cult.

Jazz is an art form and a culture that honors change and innovation. Jazz musicians are expected to constantly reinvent themselves. (The perfect paradigm is Miles Davis.) But Barber's career has been notable for its continuity. From her first record, *SPLIT*, in 1989, she has played in her own small ensembles with a small list of musicians, most based in Chicago. (She has had three drummers in 30 years.) She has concentrated on her core priorities: singing her own haunting songs in a voice that makes you sit very still in your chair; singing songs written by others in a manner that casts doubt on their previously accepted meanings; playing distinctive piano.

(She and Shirley Horn may be the best self-accompanied female vocalists in the history of jazz.) She has even been loyal, almost exclusively, to a single recording engineer, Jim Anderson. (More about him later.)

But Barber's consistency has not precluded growth. Over the years, her identity as a vocalist has evolved from someone fresh and talented to someone tested in battle who has lived to tell the tale. Her compositions, over time, have reflected deeper, more complex encounters with music and life. Her piano playing has become stronger. And she has added a genre. Since her album *VERSE* in 2002, she has been writing poetry and setting it to music, which is different from regular songwriting. Several albums of song cycles and art songs have brought her closer to classical music. She now sometimes collaborates with opera singers.

As a member of the Barber cult, I noticed the absence of recordings between 2013 and 2019. Whereas her albums had always come every two or three years, after *SMASH* in 2013 there was a six-year wait for *HIGHER* (another art song project) in 2019. I was delighted at the announcement of *CLIQUE!*, released so soon after *HIGHER*, from the same recording sessions. Full disclosure: I was delighted by something else. *CLIQUE!* is an all-standards album, only Barber's second. (The other was *NIGHTCLUB*, in 2000.)

She has composed many compelling songs but something special happens when she does a standard or a pop tune. She operates in her own aesthetic domain, and when she brings material from outside into that domain, unique creative tensions are created. "I Could Have Danced All Night" is by Lerner and Loewe. It comes of course from *MY FAIR LADY* and was first performed by Julie Andrews in the original Broadway production. It is hard to think of two singers more existentially opposed than Andrews and Barber. Andrews's song was

an outbreak of exhilaration. Barber's song, like all her songs, is turned inward. A hush always descends when Barber sings. She tends to turn things dark, but her darkness is never simple. It is like the darkness of a Rembrandt painting: a sliver of light is always allowed into the chamber, revealing unexpected details within the shadows. Her phrasing uncovers new suggestive connotations of urgency in lines like "...and still have begged for more."

She extends the dance theme with "Shall We Dance?" by Rodgers and Hammerstein. It is from another 1950's musical, *THE KING AND I*. Barber turns the song's innocent romanticism into something worldly, cool and casually sexual. This lightly throbbing version contains an actual intimate offer. Shall we dance indeed.

The sources here are all over the map. "One Note Samba," by Antonio Carlos Jobim, has been covered by legions of jazz musicians but never like this. Barber sings it in Portuguese, slowly, and turns it into one of her art songs. "This Town" and "The 'In' Crowd" deal with different dynamics

of the street, but both fit the brooding Barber atmosphere. Her love songs are unsentimental. She is wise to love's ironies. On Alec Wilder's "Trouble Is a Man" she sings, without bitterness, "Nothing good to say about him/Still I hate a day without him." When she sings of love lost on Stevie Wonder's "All in Love Is Fair," with those luminous piano fills and that rapt voice so gifted at sharing emotion, the listener is left defenseless.

Her latest band has Patrick Mulcahy on bass and Jon Deitemyer on drums. Like their predecessors Michael Arnpol and Mark Walker, their primary role in the Barber universe is to apply the pressure of contrast. Mulcahy and Deitemyer set a vibe with their snaky, nasty, insidious grooves. They are physical and visceral. Barber's voice is intellectual and spiritual. (Barber's piano is all of the above.) Guitarist Neal Alger and tenor saxophonist John Gailloro make their selective appearances count.

Engineer Jim Anderson is, for all practical purposes, a member of the band. Barber's 26-year relationship with Anderson is a

collaboration between performer and engineer with few precedents in jazz. Barber's art is dependent on nuance and shading. Anderson's recordings render every inflection of her voice with such presence and clarity you can feel her breath on your face. For years, the audiophile world has used Anderson's Barber recordings as reference resources, in equipment reviews and hi-fi shows. The sessions for *HIGHER* and now *CLIQUE!*, recorded, mixed and mastered in DXD (352.8kHz/24bit), are among Anderson's finest engineering achievements. (The mastering is the work of another elite engineer, Bob Ludwig.)

The nine tracks include two instrumental trio numbers. "Mashup" is impulsive and sprawling. "Straight, No Chaser" is a bold, free take on Monk. Mulcahy holds down the center while Barber spills over the sides.

But her vocals are what created the cult. I have often thought I would like to hear Patricia Barber sing every song I ever liked. *CLIQUE!* puts me seven songs closer to that impossible goal. —Thomas Conrad

FOR OVER 30 YEARS THOMAS CONRAD HAS BEEN A PROLIFIC JOURNALIST, FOCUSING PRIMARILY ON THE SUBJECT OF JAZZ. HE HAS BEEN A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR AT STEREOPHILE SINCE 1995. HIS WORK HAS APPEARED IN MANY PUBLICATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE, INCLUDING JAZZTIMES, THE NEW YORK CITY JAZZ RECORD, AND DOWNBEAT.

A photograph of a man with glasses and dark hair, wearing a dark shirt, leaning over a piano. He is playing the piano in a dimly lit room with warm, low-key lighting. A microphone is visible in the background.

silky
velvet
languid
warm

A close-up photograph of a piano keyboard, showing the keys and the fallboard. The lighting is dark and moody, with some highlights on the keys and the wood of the piano.

Lots of ways to describe Patricia Barber's voice, and how it feels to listen to her. *Oh, hip too.* Singing, playing piano, Patricia respects traditions, and bends them to make her own points. I like that she takes songs we know so well — "Shall We Dance?," "One Note Samba," "I Could Have Danced All Night" and freshens them into something new. She also offers less familiar songs and makes them sound vintage.

There's a shimmer to this album, splendidly achieved by her musicians: Patricia, piano; Patrick Mulcahy, bass; Jon Deitemyer, drums; Neal Alger, guitar; and Jim Gailloro, tenor sax. They surround her — couch her really — with elegant support.

It's an album for pleasure — personal or shared.

You'll want to share it: "Listen to **THIS** one!"

SUSAN STAMBERG, JAZZ LOVER AND SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT, NPR



a personal note
from Jim Anderson

Contrary
to
widespread
belief,
Divas
are
Cool
...

Cultivated, sophisticated, urbane. Cool.
I'm sure you know a Diva who is Cool.
A hip, connected friend who is
comfortable in their skin.

Patricia is Cool and then some,
personally and musically.
How hip is Patricia, you ask?
Patricia's so hip that when it comes
to singing well-known standards,
I feel as if I'm on the inside,
living inside an ageless and familiar song
and I'm hearing it for the first time.

I've always admired Patricia's selection
of modern classics and her
relaxed confidence in performance
of these songs in person and on record.
Clique is Cool personified. Join the Cool.
Join the Clique!





a personal note from Patricia Barber

What you hear on this album *CLIQUE!* is a finely tuned piano trio of musicians and friends having fun in the studio, fortuitously caught on tape by the recording genius of Jim Anderson and Ulrike Schwarz.

Patrick Mulcahy on acoustic bass and Jon Deitemyer on drums are brilliant musicians — sensitive to me as singer, composer, and pianist. With the addition of stellar musicians Neal Alger on acoustic guitar and Jim Gaillone- to on tenor saxophone, you have the working group from Monday nights at the Green Mill. That steady gig has enabled us to experiment, stretch boundaries, enjoy. We have also traveled the world together, most recently for my album *HIGHER* (ARTISTSHARE 2019).

What I like the most about this trio, and what is nearly impossible to find now in the musical landscape, is the wide range of dynamic control we employ. The dynamic continuum starts and ends at silence, and in-between we have volume at a whisper, a smooth, confident, medium volume, and volume that's hip, modern, raucous.

Patrick and Jon are funny, kind, smart human beings and virtuosic musicians. We enjoy being together (this is not a given for musicians on the road), sight-seeing together, debriefing together after the concerts.

We had a book club! In trains, planes, soundchecks, and vans, you would often see us reading. When Yuval Harari came out with his two books, *Sapiens* and *Homo Deus*, I picked them up for our book club while we were in Milwaukee. One night, farther down the road, just before curtain call, Patrick came up to Jon and me and said, "Don't read the second book! Don't read *Homo Deus*!" He had tears in his eyes. "You don't want to know." Jon and I looked at each other and agreed we wouldn't read the book. If intelligent, handsome, confident Australian Patrick found it too dystopian, profoundly sad, we would trust his judgment. This moment stays with me. We were that close.

CLIQUE! is the fun-loving, intrepid side of this group, playing covers we have refined at the Green Mill and on the road. It is a warm, life-affirming album that I hope you will enjoy.

PB, 2021





produced by
**Patricia Barber &
Jim Anderson**

Executive Producer
for Impex Records: **ABEY FONN**

Associate Producers: **MARTHA FELDMAN** and **ULRIKE SCHWARZ**

Recorded at **Chicago Recording Company, Studio 5**
Chicago, IL, January 2019

Assistant Engineer: **JONATHAN LACKEY**

Mixed at **Skywalker Sound, a Lucasfilm, Ltd. Company**
Marin County, CA, February 2020

Assistant Engineer: **DANN THOMPSON**

Mastered by **BOB LUDWIG** at Gateway Mastering • Portland, ME

Technical producer: **ULRIKE SCHWARZ**

DSD Authoring: **GUS SKINAS** at Super Audio Center • Boulder, CO

Art Direction & Design: **ROBERT SLIGER** @ HebegebeStudio

Photography: **JIM ANDERSON, VALERIE BOOTH O, ATTILA KLEB, ANDY
WEISENFARTH, JAMMI YORK, and MARTEN BJORN &
MIIKA AIRIKKALA** [courtesy Unsplash]

5.1 Surround producer: **JIM ANDERSON**

5.1 Surround Engineers: **JIM ANDERSON** and **ULRIKE SCHWARZ**

5.1 Surround mixed at **Skywalker Sound, a Lucasfilm, Ltd. Company**
Marin County, CA, February 2020

Assistant Engineer: **DANN THOMPSON**

5.1 Surround mastered by **BOB LUDWIG** at **Gateway Mastering** • Portland, ME



This project was recorded, mixed and mastered in High Resolution DXD (352.8kHz/32bit) using a Horus/Pyramix recording system and the Merging+Clock U.

Anderson Audio NY gives special thanks for technical support to AccuSound audio cables, The John Hardy Company, Merging Technologies, MusicCord power cables and Sennheiser microphones.

Impex Records would like to thank everyone who made this project both possible and incredibly fulfilling to make: Jim Anderson and

Ulrike Schwarz for being wonderful partners and making the record sound so damn good; Bob Ludwig for polishing (mastering) it to a perfect sonic shine; Dave Obrymski and everyone at Stoughton Printing for making it as good to look at as it is to listen to. We are especially grateful to Patricia Barber for entrusting us with giving these exceptional performances the "Impex Treatment" they deserve and for inviting listeners deeper into these classical songs with inimitable musicianship and commanding interpretive skill.



This Town (4:34)

LEE HAZLEWOOD (WARNER BROS MUSIC, INC./ASCAP)

Trouble is a Man (3:53)

ALEC WILDER (LUDLOW MUSIC, INC./BMI)

Mashup (8:05)

PATRICIA BARBER (PATSY PUBLISHING/BMI)

Samba de Uma Nota Só (One Note Samba) (4:28)

ANTÔNIO CARLOS JOBIM/NEWTON MENDONÇA (SONGS OF UNIVERSAL, INC./BMI)

I Could Have Danced All Night (4:56)

LERNER/LOEWE (WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC, INC./ASCAP)

The In Crowd (4:29)

BILLY PAGE (WARNER CHAPPELL MUSIC, INC./BMI)

Shall We Dance? (4:20)

RODGERS/HAMMERSTEIN II (CONCORD MUSIC/ASCAP)

Straight No Chaser (6:09)

THELONIOUS MONK (THELONIOUS MUSIC CORP./BMI)

All in Love is Fair (4:23)

STEVIE WONDER (BLACK BULL MUSIC, INC./JOBETTE MUSIC CO., INC./ASCAP)