



## Jessica Jones

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### Reviews of Jessica Jones & Connie Crothers *Live at the Freight*

#### **Jessica Jones & Connie Crothers, Live at the Freight**

by Grego Applegate Edwards - Gapplegate Music Review

Connie Crothers is one of the living masters of the jazz piano legacy, no question. She has made album after album of original cutting-edge piano jazz, yet she also encompasses the entire tradition. Lately she hasn't channeled as much of that tradition on disk as she used to. But then enter *Live at the Freight* (New Artists 1056). It's Connie and the rather under-recorded Jessica Jones on alto sax, in a series of duets recorded live at the Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse in Berkeley, summer 2011.

It's a studied, exciting exercise in rethinking bop-and-after tradition, freely interpreted for the avant sensibilities of today. They tackle some of the old chestnuts like "All the Things You Are" and "There Will Never Be Another You," go full throttle into some free improvisations, and end with a Jessica Jones original.

In the process you hear some first-level interaction between Jessica and Connie. Jessica turns out to be quite well matched with Ms. Crothers. Like Connie, Ms. Jones has thoroughly absorbed the tradition and makes of it something very personal and modern-free. It's a wonderful series of dual improvisations to be heard here. Connie is on a roll with all the considerable pianism she has to devote to the music. She encompasses the harmonic implications of both the music channeled and the immediacy of her freely inventive partner, melodically countering Ms. Jones' very creative line weavings with those of her own. They play their way in and out of the melodic-harmonic particulars of the standards with a thoughtful vibrancy, then soar in the freely devised sections.

*Live at the Freight* has it all. Jessica Jones at her impressive best, a post-Bird flying gracefully, skillfully, creatively. Connie Crothers taking the music apart and putting it back together in her very own way, confirming why she is so important to the scene.

This one takes flight and takes you far. You will not be disappointed.

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#### **Connie Crothers and Jessica Jones - Live At the Freight (2013)**

by Jordan Richardson - Something Else! Reviews

Pianist Connie Crothers and tenor saxophonist Jessica Jones color outside the lines on *Live At the Freight*, a duo recording taken from a session in August of 2011 at the Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse in Berkeley.

Through the course of seven tracks, Crothers and Jones mesh their improvisational instincts with their practical talents and turn in a set of free-flowing music. The quality of the partnership is apparent from the outset; these two artists listen as well as they play, fusing elegant and sharp lines to the underpinnings of some of the American Songbook's finest entries.

"Musically speaking and on a life level, we feel areas of enormous affinity," Crothers says of her relationship with the saxophonist. "Jessica is a great friend and we have talked about how we were shaped by growing up in Northern California and making our way as improvising musicians in New York. There's a freedom that comes from the recognition of this affinity."

This sense of freedom is apparent at the outset of *Live At the Freight*, with an almost eccentric rendering of "All the Things You Are" by Kern and Hammerstein leading off the record. The familiarity of the melody is present but elusive, with Crothers' ivories tapping around the core and Jones' reed exploring the contours of the music rather than the basis of it.

There's also "In a Sentimental Mood." Once again, the ideological path through this Duke Ellington joint isn't so much about playing a standard as it is playing with a standard. Crothers builds tension with various piano flourishes and a spacious, intelligent solo, while Jones pushes through with muscled tones and emotional purpose.

Crothers has indeed been busy as of late, with five albums - including a four-CD box set - released last year alone. *TranceFormation*, a bracing and clever record featuring Andrea Wolper and Ken Filiano, seems to have at least in part laid some of the groundwork for the *Freight* session.

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**Jessica Jones & Connie Crothers Live at the Freight New Artists Records 2013**  
by Brent Black - Critical Jazz (5 Stars)

A stealth recording deserving of wide spread critical acclaim!

Straight up, Jessica Jones and Connie Crothers Live at the Freight is an absolute gem! Why? Simple...Take iconic standards performed at an exemplary level such as Duke Ellington's

"In A Sentimental Mood" then carefully intermingled some highly accessible yet spontaneously energetic free jazz and you have a live duo that is crossing musical planes and welcoming everyone along for the journey. The venue is the Freight & Salvage Coffeehouse in Berkeley and if not only the traveling improvisational aficionados radar then it well should be...

Two refer to these two ladies of jazz as fearless is the classic undersell. Anyone can share a bandstand and make great music, sharing the stage with a friend takes the music to a special place of connectivity that is on most occasions lost. You have to do more than play the notes. You have to make the music. Jones and Crothers become the music and the end result is indeed a beautiful thing. Connie Crothers is an infamous "underground" pianist long since

championed by such luminaries as Lennie Tristano and Max Roach. Jessica Jones is a tenor saxophonist with the grit and resolve to hold her own on any bandstand.

"All The Things You Are" is treated as an evocative exploration of the Kern/Hammerstein classic where each in turn provides the perfect counterpoint for the other. Were it not for a working knowledge of the catalog from which they pull the Jessica Jones composition "Family" might easily pass as perhaps as a lesser known tune pulled from the Great American Songbook. The free improvisation including "Clothespins In A Row" is but a taste of the harmonic vision these two individuals have come to embrace playing free jazz in various intimate venues with other ensembles. The duet concept of piano and saxophone can on occasion come off "rehearsed" and with that flash back to the recitals most of us either attended or performed. Not here, Live at the Freight is spontaneous creativity at its finest.

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### **Jessica Jones and Connie Crothers**

#### **Live at the Freight**

New Artists \*\*\*1/2

by Marlbank - Outside In

Recorded in Berkeley two summers ago at the Freight & Salvage coffee house there's a wonderful rising fire here that hits you hard, but only after the main themes of the mainly familiar tunes have been played even if the clues are laid bare. Enter in and that's when the astringent chordal choices pianist Crothers chooses so well appear, and that's the buzz. A Lennie Tristano protégée now in her seventies, who also notably recorded Swish with Max Roach in the 1980s, Crothers chooses bittersweet harmonies, hinting at the plangently atonal but suitably hard wired in to the fundamental "Broadway" sound of old bebop. Jessica Jones locates her sound in the Warne Marsh domain, a style that exudes the more observational aspect of the Cool School: laconic and strongly seasoned yet very real. The atmosphere of Live at the Freight is like a W. Eugene Smith photograph. Nestled within the seven tracks are two improvisations where the experimental code is laid out and these episodes help go some way to explaining the duo's complexity. Jones, a former student of Makanda Ken McIntyre, who becomes more uninhibited and natural as the album proceeds, catches Crothers' drift early, and signposts new space for the pianist as the gig unfolds. High points? The opening of 'In a Sentimental Mood' where the tune goes into a 'God Bless the Child' soundspace momentarily; and Jones' characterful and breathy opening to 'There Will Never Be Another You.'

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### **Live at the Freight: Jessica Jones and Connie Crothers**

by Tom Greenland - NYC Jazz Record

Live at the Freight captures a relaxed duo concert by tenor saxophonist Jessica Jones and pianist Connie Crothers, performed at Berkeley, California's Freight and Salvage Coffee House.

Both originally from the Bay Area - Jones is a product of Berkeley's fertile multi-kulti jazz scene while Crothers majored in music at the university - the two women were far from a New-York-State-of-mind this evening, opting for a more laid-back take on three standards,

three free improvs and a compelling original.

On "All the Things You Are," "In a Sentimental Mood" and "There Will Never Be Another You" the duo hews close to the underlying song-forms, Jones usually laying out stoic but subtly unorthodox melody statements while Crothers is more extroverted and expansive in her accompanying prods, responses and side-trackings, often branching out into rhapsodic soliloquies. Many of Crothers' vignettes could stand alone, restless ruminations that maintain their coherence through oblique allusions to the song structure and a firm, if implied, pulse. Jones often seems to be hovering in the shadows, a patient observer, as if she's playing not the first but the second musical thought that comes to mind. "Another You" contains some sublime moments realized through offhand cadences and elastic interplay.

Interspersed between the standards are completely spontaneous pieces, the first a tentative reconnoitering, the second achieving a mellow tunefulness suspended in time, the third building in tiered climaxes. Jones' poignant ballad "Family" - one of those tunes you could swear you've heard before - closes this fine set of laid-back radicalism, what you might call "Left Coast" jazz.