



INTERVIEWS

Interview – Anita Eccleston

I recently featured **Anita Eccleston's** track *Long Nights* in a round-up review of holiday/Christmas songs. Anita is extremely talented so I thought it would be a good idea to have a chat and find out a little more – find out how I got on below!

By Jane Howkins

You released a holiday track last year titled *Long Nights*, which we reviewed. What can you tell us about the track and where can it be purchased?

I wrote *Long Nights* while missing my family last Christmas. It's a reflection on the childlike wonder that fills the holiday season. I wanted to capture the nostalgia the season has, through both the lyrics and the music. The jazz chord structure lent it a timeless quality, tapping into what has become a classic sound of jazzy Christmas – a hopeful era of music as WWII ended and the world was healing. I chose a tempo that was almost uncomfortably laid-back – the holiday season is often the busiest time of the year with so much to do. I hoped to help people stop and take a step back to catch their breath and savour the beauty of all the little moments happening around them.

It's available for purchase and streaming on all platforms worldwide, including **Bandcamp**.

<https://an...dcamp.com/>

Would you ever consider doing more Christmas/holiday songs in the future? How do you celebrate the holidays?

I would indeed and have plotted to do so, however I am keen to write another original holiday song rather than covering the pop hits. Or even, I wish to reinvent really old sacred carols in a way that transforms them, while retaining their nostalgic essence.

I celebrate the holidays with a good dose of family (when possible), eggnog and rum, movie nights and night walks to see the lights. I do a bit of baking and enjoy assembling jigsaw puzzles or **Fragmentary Time Wasters**, as my Radiohead *In Rainbows* puzzle this year was dubbed.

Have you got any plans to release a full length album or an EP anytime soon?

I do. I have a whole collection of unreleased songs and am keen to record as soon as possible. I am undecided at this exact moment if it will be an EP or a full length album, although I am leaning towards the album. There is one song in particular that I wrote in April, called **The Prayer** that I am keen to release as soon as possible. It was born out of an incredible amount of stress, a plea to a higher power for comfort during an intense crisis. I performed it live at the **Vancouver International Jazz Festival** last July and it produced an exceptionally strong audience reaction.

You're based in Canada. What is the music scene like in your part of the world?

Pre-pandemic it was very diverse and active. The scene has struggled to survive, and some little jazz clubs have done just that, following protocols strictly. Things really started bouncing back late this fall, however recent surge cases have put the brakes on many events. **Coastal Jazz** managed to put on the jazz fest last summer with a full streaming package plus limited capacity live audiences which was an ingenious pivot.

What is the writing and recording process like for you?

Traditionally it is quite varied. Lately my writing process involves me unplugging from screen distractions and finding a bit of regular quiet time to reflect on what I am trying to say. I have to carve out time for the process. It's harder to piece together the fleeting ideas that drift through my mind day to day, though I have the scraps of paper all collected into a book, and countless voice memos to go through. Once I pinpoint an idea that I like, I tend to obsess about it, thinking about it in every spare thought.

I usually finish writing a song before I start recording it in earnest. I consider the arrangement, and create demos to refine the sound I am seeking on the track. The process of preliminary recordings can really help to illuminate the path the song wants to take. In recent years I have done more live show workshopping of my new songs, finding the treatment I like or don't like through that process. Each song has its own story, though I do find that the best ones tend to come out of me quickly, and I have been getting better and better at nurturing them when they do manifest.

Do you plan to release any singles at any point in the near future?

I am considering *The Prayer* as my next single release, because I don't think it can wait for a whole album to be completed to be heard. I think people need it right now, no matter what their beliefs are. These are dark times and people tend to turn to a higher power when they feel that they have no control over their situation. And powerlessness was a big theme for the last couple years. There is something about relinquishing the semblance of control that is soothing. I think it will help people, so I may just release it as soon as I can, possibly as a single.

What/who influences you most as an artist? What have you been listening to recently?

My list of influences is too long to write out, however I can say that jazz in general is my go to to let my creative juices flow, though when I write I tend to follow the footsteps of the singer songwriters I love. A big one for me has been **Amy Winehouse**, writing with the depth of honesty and vulnerable storytelling.

Lately I have been listening to **Fiona Apple** and **Madeleine Peyroux**. My interests for future recordings also stray into melding electronic beats with my jazzy melodies. I want to create new sounds with every new song, and I am working on a composition right now that is in this vein, something I think would be good company for *The Prayer* on a release.

Has the pandemic hindered your work much?

In some ways yes, the sparseness of my gig schedule has been a strange change. The upside is it has allowed me the time to focus on my songwriting and to finish several songs that were in progress for a shocking amount of time. Doing so has opened up the floodgates of creativity, and new ideas keep coming at me. Writing is like turning on a tap, once it's going the songs start flowing.

Do you have any tour dates lined up? What can people expect from one of your shows and why should people come and see you perform live?

Most recently I did perform at a sweet jazz club to support *Long Nights*, and I produced a super fun and silly **Holiday Variety Show Party!** via **YouTube Livestream**. I am cautious with booking any type of tour at present—these last few weeks have felt like the first couple of weeks in March 2020 with everything getting cancelled. I am hopeful that in the months ahead returning to performing for live audiences becomes more

comfortable and normal again.

When you do finally hear me play live you can expect a show that has heart, and takes you on many twists and turns. I like to make my audiences groove, and to pleasantly surprise them. My sets are packed with my originals, delightful covers and jazz classics, carefully crafted to take you on a sonic voyage with me.

Any last words for the fans?

Thank you and I love you. You are the people I make music for and I hope that we continue to connect through my songs and music.

04/01/2022