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### JazzImprov review By Bill Donaldson

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#### GRACE TESTANI SOMETHING'S COMING,

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Sweetest Sounds, Morning Sunshower, Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone, Watching the Wind, Something's Coming, But Beautiful, Invitation, Show Me, Never Had the Chance, High Fly.

**PERSONNEL:** Grace Testani (vocals); Roger Rosenberg (soprano saxophone); Jim McNeely (piano); Mike Richmond, Chip Jackson (bass); Danny Gottlieb, Terry Silverlight, Adam Nussbaum (drums); Dale Gordon (congas, percussion); Sammy Figueroa (timbales, clave); Café (repineque, timba);

The first thing a listener hears on Grace Testani's *Something's Coming* isn't Grace Testani, but rather an obviously seasoned back-up group complete with congas and a McCoy Tyner-influenced vamp. In only 14 seconds, the take-charge nature of the instrumentalists creates anticipation for the singer to follow. Testani doesn't disappoint. Instead of meeting expectations head-on with the melody of "Sweetest Sounds," Testani repeats the note on which pianist Jim McNeely concludes the intro, and then descends chromatically to the resolution of first chorus at the repeat. Testani possesses verve and force and puts them to use in her singing.

*Something's Coming* truly is a singer's recording, particularly as Testani leads the rest of the group, ferocious though it may be, through her own scat chorus of "Sweetest Sounds." After the respite provided by McNeely's and bassist Mike Richmond's joyfully expressed solos, Testani, in true dramatic fashion, concludes the song with a will-she-really-go-for-that-note? taking of risk before the gradual fadeout, complete with allusions to "It Ain't Necessarily So." The remainder of *Something's Coming* remains at the same high level.

On the next track, Kenny Barron's "Morning Sunshower" (for which Testani wrote the words), the importance of percussion is evident as Dale Gordon's contribution becomes more pronounced in coloring the music. In addition, the song proceeds on two levels: the ethereal nature of the chorus, and the intensely propulsive nature of the piano solo, faster, distinctive and still complementary to Testani's overall arrangement.

The fact that Testani arranged all of the music becomes more impressive on her version of "Ain't No Sunshine When She's Gone." Instead of the more laid-back original nature of the song, Testani, apparently strongly affected by clavé, alternates compressed groupings of lyrics with long tones at the ends of the phrases, over her back-up group's percolating rhythm and exhilarating vamp.

Chick Corea's "Watching the Wind" receives a similarly personalized perspective, that of Testani's, including once again her own words. Loping along at three-four with typical Corea-like grace, the song presents challenges to a singer, including the changes of tempo and unexpected intervallic leaps, which Testani captures with ease while still investing emotion in the song. Once again, McNeely's solo, with its usual structural logic and its harmonically acuity, is a highlight of the track as he builds the tension, only to release it in a softened glide-in to Testani's singing.

So what would make "Show Me" more interesting than its show-tune origins and more memorable than the usual roller-coaster ride of dynamic highs and lows and sudden stops? Testani arranged it in 5/4, the two-note phrases of the melody ("Don't talk" "of stars" "burn-ing" "a-bove") forming the foundation of the metrical variation of the chorus before the unison voice/ piano cascading at the bridge ("Here we are together / In the middle of the night").

On "Invitation," Testani punches out the notes at the high point of the song to heighten the excitement and to bring meaning to the narrative nature of its lyrics. Thought recorded in 1995 and released after the inexplicable length of more than a decade, ***Something's Coming* features fresh arrangements, a top-notch back-up group and a singer who immerses herself in the music.**

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