

# Jazz singer Deanne Matley journeys through love, loss and t on fifth album

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singer Deanne Matley. KELLEY MATLEY

On Calgary singer Deanne Matley's fifth record *Because I Love*, there are two numbers that seem to represent opposite sides of the jazz spectrum

The hard-swinging and irreverent *So Long You Fool*, written by Matley's pianist and arranger Paul Shrofel and his wife Sharada Banman, is a playful and defiant kiss-off to a former lover. Her take on Vince Jones' *TI After Thought*, on the other hand, is a sorrowful and torchy heartbreaker that mourns the loss of a love that was never meant to be.

According to Matley, both vocal performances were inspired by the same drama in her life, namely the breakup of a 12-year marriage.

"When my marriage ended, I never felt pain like that before," she says. "My world completely shifted and changed and then it became a new journey. On *The After Thought*, the original lyric actually is '1,000 memories have made me strong.' But for some reason, when I was in the studio, I was singing '10,000 memories.' Well, that's the truth. There was that connection."

*Because I Loved* is Matley's first record in four years. Recorded in Montreal with drummer Jim Doxas as producer, she gathered a number of that city's jazz players, including bassist Adrian Vedady and guitarist Steve Raegele, for a mix of originals and cover songs.

She penned four of the songs, but Matley says even the covers were meticulously chosen as guideposts on an emotional journey through love, loss and lust. Musically, it entails everything from the fiery jazz-pop of original *My Favourite Distraction*, to the swinging call-and-response take on the Ella Fitzgerald-Louis Armstrong standard *Necessary Evil*, which Matley sings with mentor and jazz great Ranee Lee.

There's even a surprisingly nuanced and beautifully rendered vocal-piano-cello arrangement of Journey's 1980s cheesy power-ballad *Open Arms*.

"I bought the sheet music for it many years ago and thought 'this song has great legs,'" she says. "I'm not really an '80s fan. Journey is cool, but I don't love their version of *Open Arms*. I loved the melody and the

lyrics. For me, this song is about intimacy and deep vulnerability, so I wanted it to be sparse. Hence the piano and cello. Cello is one of those instruments that draws out the emotion.”

Matley’s first introduction to the genre came in Lord Beaverbrook High School when, after spending years singing in choirs, decided to join the jazz choir. That led to the decidedly off-road musical excursion of barbershop music of all things.

“I joined a Sweet Adeline Barbershop chorus,” she says with a laugh. “I was the youngest girl in the chorus and singing barbershop. But there was this beautiful element of performance in barbershop.”

Musical theatre followed, with Matley performing in productions of My Fair Lady, Jesus Christ Superstar, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Evita and the Sound of Music for various companies in Calgary. She later joined R&B and classic-rock bands before returning to jazz.

In 2012, she released Stealin’ Blue, a mix of jazz and pop tunes that included everything from Cyndi Lauper’s True Colours to jazz standards such as When Sunny Gets Blue. Other albums followed, including a 2013 Christmas album called Get in the Mood and Can’t Help Falling, a 2014 collaboration with guitarist Larry Koonse featuring stripped-down arrangements of jazz classics.

But with Because I Loved, Matley was intent on finding a collection of songs that showcased her versatility while maintaining a thematic thread that directly related to her life experiences. She will hold a CD release party on Saturday at Knox United Church, where 12 musicians will be enlisted to capture the various shades of the record.

“I went through each song and associated a colour with it, an emotion with it and the lineage to relationships,” Matley says. “There’s songs on there about sex, there’s songs about love, intimacy, heartbreak. It all lined up so beautifully. I connect with every single song.”

*Deanne Matley performs Saturday, May 5 at Knox United Church at 7:30 p.m. Visit [becauseiloved.deannematley.com](http://becauseiloved.deannematley.com) (<http://becauseiloved.deannematley.com/>) for details.*