



SWEET BABY J'AI

www.sweetbabyjai.com



B I O G R A P H Y

Sweet Baby J'ai (pronounced Jay) is one of the most respected and multi-faceted performers today. She is an award winning, critically acclaimed singer, songwriter, producer, arranger, actress and the Artistic Director for the Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival.

Few entertainers can command a stage like the indefatigable, Sweet Baby J'ai. She has toured the world with her genre-defying work, which both embraces and expands jazz tradition. She has headlined concerts and festivals across the globe from New York to London, Moscow and Casablanca to Paris, Tokyo, Jakarta and many cities and countries beyond. Known for her sensual and powerful vocals, some critics describe her as a "jazz singer", others as a "blues singer" but all agree that this versatile singer-songwriter is a "storyteller". J'ai has won three Bravo "Entertainer of the Year" awards, two Blues and Soul Magazine "Best Jazz Vocal Performance" awards, three nominations for Jazz Now awards for "Best Vocal Jazz", LA Women's Theatre Project and ETI "Best Actress in a Leading Role" awards, and was recently honored as a Living Jazz Legend by the Los Angeles City Council. She has received rave reviews both domestically and internationally and has successfully sold her albums worldwide, including her latest, *Straight To That Place*.

In early life J'ai Michel was first called Sweet Baby by her mother, claiming she was the sweetest child ever born, the name stuck. Music was an integral part of her life since childhood, often being serenaded by Miles, Bird, Ella or Billie, albums her father would put on to lull her to sleep. J'ai grew up in a city rich with musical history, Kansas City, home to legends like Big Joe Turner, Charlie "Bird" Parker and Count Basie. At only five years old, she was already writing songs and by the age of eight, sneaking in the backdoors of clubs on 18th & Vine to watch her father play with top jazz and blues musicians. Her uncle, Vernon Gower was a bassist with Billie Holiday and Lionel Hampton and her cousin Michael Howell, was the guitarist with Dizzie Gillespie. By age ten she had started classical piano studies, by twelve she had switched to violin. "I played a little bass in high school, some guitar in college until I got my hands on a 12 string and couldn't figure it out. It wasn't until I spent some time in Louisiana with relatives, and came across an old back porch band playing washboard, spoons, tubs, and combs, that I felt I had found home. All sorts of wonderful sounds were coming out of them. They were playing jug or Zydeco music, but I heard the transition to jazz," says J'ai. Talented both as a vocalist and musician, she takes unconventional instruments, the washboard and spoons, and claims them as her own special sound. As one critic pointed out, "This ain't no backyard hoe down...she will have you swooning before the concert is over." Whether singing a soulful ballad or a rocking original, she weaves her special magic through songs seemingly tailor-made for her intimate style.

Sweet Baby J'ai has shared the stage with such luminaries as, Herbie Hancock, Diane Schuur, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Joe Sample, Melissa Etheridge, Etta James, Jill Scott, Tom Waits, Koko Taylor, Patrice Rushen, Sheila E., Tramaine Hawkins, Stanley Turrentine, Eddie Harris, and many more.

B I O G R A P H Y cont'd.



As Artistic Director of the **Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival**, Sweet Baby J'ai brings a wealth of experience and focus to the Festival. She has worked in various capacities, including talent buyer for the LA Summer Festival, Juneteenth Festival, Concerts in the Park and other major music events throughout the country. She brings a new perspective to programming choices by featuring some of the world's most visible, high-level jazz performers with cutting edge, emerging artists. Her drive and vision; introducing her Women in Jazz All-Stars recipe, fosters appreciation and understanding of the contribution that women have played in jazz.

Past projects include her chart climbing albums: debut 1997 release, **THE ART OF BLUE**, followed in 2003 by **EVOLUTION** both featuring the genius of pianist Nate Morgan and saxophonist, Teddy Edwards. In 2005 came, **JAZZ BABY** where Sweet Baby J'ai joined forces with Janis Siegel, Freddie Cole, Rosemary Clooney and others for a fun filled children's compilation jazz album. **PROVE IT ON ME** released in 2008 is a soundtrack from Dee Jae Cox's play of the same name in which Sweet Baby J'ai starred. This roaring 1920's romp allows J'ai to do what she does so well - take the listener on a journey through time and space. Also in 2008 **INTRODUCING J'AI MICHEL** was released to wide acclaim, an eclectic mix of jazz pop and blues and featured legendary percussionist Perico Hernandez. The 2013 single release of **BLACK MAGIC WOMAN** sold out the first week of it's release, and the 2015 DIW release of **FOR VOCAL JAZZ FANS ONLY** hit the air waves in Japan before going worldwide.

Sweet Baby J'ai's latest album, **STRAIGHT TO THAT PLACE**, showcases sublime offerings melding jazz, blues, pop and Latin. There are incredible nuances and bold statements happening simultaneously - respected for her considerable gifts as a vocalist and songwriter, J'ai's original compositions draw us in with their openhearted lyrics, working into our consciousness and taking us to wondrous places. She breathes new life into classics with great reinterpretations giving us a new scope to appreciate timeless songs with a different perspective. Her deeply soulful vocals are infectious, and the stellar support by musicians Mimi Fox, Nolan Shaheed, Jane Getz, Karen Hammack, Chris Colangelo, Peter Buck, Carol Chaikin, Bob Tucker and others are electrifying. Straight To That Place delivers on what it promises, taking its listeners straight to wonderland!

"5 out of 5 stars!" — **Arts and Entertainment**

"...extraordinary...a stunning performer." — **Jazz Now**

"...swinging...powerful...and haunting." — **Los Angeles Times**

"...show-stopper...a sensational performer." — **Durango Herald**



P R E S S Q U O T E S

"Music lovers will be hard pressed to determine if Sweet Baby J'ai is a jazz singer or blues singer - she does both with great aplomb. Her voice is part cream, part honey and all soul...wonderfully original."

-- **New York Times**

"Award winning, songwriter and chanteuse, Sweet Baby J'ai has become one of Miami's favorite imports. She takes you down memory lane for an evening of romance."

-- **Miami Herald**

"History, theater and song, from a voice reminiscent of the Great Sarah Vaughan. Sweet Baby J'ai's tribute is a show you don't want to miss!"

-- **Boston Globe**

"Sweet Baby J'ai wowed the celebrants with her sweet, soulful, spellbinding voice, commanding stage presence, and versatile performances with differing musical instruments. She was truly the consummate Diva".

-- **The Messenger**

"In Los Angeles, we have one singer in particular who seems destined for greatness, Sweet Baby J'ai. I advise all jazz and blues fans to go out of their way to see her in concert."

-- **Music Connection Magazine**

"A powerful performer blessed with Lena Horne's biting enunciation, J'ai sometimes sounds as pure and creamy as Ann Hampton Calloway, other times embraces the earthy integrity of Nina Simone."

--**The Jazz Times**

"Sweet Baby J'ai has heard the buzz about her growing into a roar since the release of her CD. She proved Saturday night that the roar is justified. Take my advice, run don't walk to catch her while she is here in Tokyo."

--**Metro Japan**

"Sweet Baby J'ai will no doubt be considered a legend in her own time, but will also be a reference point for future extraordinary jazz musicians to be compared to. She is by any critic's opinion, the real deal."

-- **LN Magazine**

"Sweet Baby J'ai channels attitude, a riveting stage presence, and a voice that fondles, wheels, and wrings out the blues. If there were a Mensa for singers, she'd be a member. "

-- **LA.com**

"Sweet Baby J'ai gives you a flawless performance! A strong actress and a spine tingling soulful vocalist."

-- **Tolucan Times**

IN THE PRESS



[Read Full Article](#)

Sweet Baby J'ai in Concert

"Sweet Baby J'ai hits the stage with energy and powerful vocals performing jazz, blues, funk, gospel, soul, pop and even R & B brilliantly!"

-- Ulyanovsk Philharmonic
October 2016



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Introducing Sweet Baby J'ai

"If you take earthy soul, mix it with some groove, add some silky smoke, and blend it with cool - you have the incredible song stylings of J'ai Michel."

-- She Magazine
January 2012



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Living the Blues and All That Jazz

"Full of surprises and a seemingly inexhaustible energy, J'ai commands the stage like few others."

-- LN Magazine
February 2013



[Full PDF Article Available](#)

The Sweet Sounds of Baby J'ai

"Sweet Baby J'ai was chosen for the cover of our magazine, not only because her voice ranges from elastic and pure to ethereal and earthy, but because she does it all and does it all beautifully."

-- Provincetown Magazine
June 2009

IN THE PRESS cont'd.

Los Angeles Times
CALENDAR
 SUNDAY : PART 1

January 27, 2002



**Sweet Baby J'ai Offers
 Vocal Pyrotechnics**

There's never any doubt who's in command when singer Sweet Baby J'ai is on stage. Sweeping masterfully from one side to the other, urging her musicians with body language and vocal exhortations, interacting with her listeners, she is a consummate entertainer, constantly seeking to make the most of every possible performing moment. On Tuesday night at Catalina Bar & Grill, before a packed-house,

enthusiastic crowd, Sweet Baby J'ai (the only name she uses) was in high gear from the first notes of her opening number—an offbeat rendering of Thelonious Monk's "In Walked Bud." The balance of the program, virtually all of it drawn from her new CD, "Evolution" (Sunset Music Group), continued at the same pace, driven by J'ai's seemingly inexhaustible supply of musical energy. Equally important, she worked hard to bring a new perspective to virtually every tune. There was, for example, a quirky version of "Nature Boy," with atmospheric accompaniment from Sherman Ferguson's drumming, Carol Chaikin's flute playing and unidentified participant's simulated bird whistles—unusual, but intriguing. The Ray Charles hit "Hit the Road, Jack" emerged in combination with "I Got Rhythm," and the Gershwin's "Summertime" was positioned within a rap about the glory days of Central Avenue. I Don't Want The Neighbors To Know" left the standing audience with no doubt that this multi-talented performer is an important voice in jazz.

JAZZ REVIEW
 By DON HECKMAN
 SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

MUSIC CONNECTION
 Informing Music People Since 1977



Photo by Rhonda Jackson

**s far as I'm concerned, jazz
 d blues are one thing.**
 — Sweet Baby J'ai

Shows and Events
 By Dan Kimpel

fyi

Sweet Baby J'ai comes from a musical family. Her father was a Kansas City sessions man; her uncle played with Billie Holiday and Lionel Hampton; and her cousin played with Dizzy Gillespie.

Sweet Baby J'ai Blends Jazz and Blues Into One Sound

The Evolution of Sweet Baby J'ai. Los Angeles-based vocalist extraordinaire Sweet Baby J'ai has just released her latest, *Evolution*, on SMG Records. With guests Teddy Edwards on tenor sax and Oscar Brashear on trumpet, it's an enchanting mix of J'ai's original tunes crossed pollinated with classic selections including the Nat "King" Cole classic, "Nature Boy," and the Ray Charles nugget, "Hit the Road Jack." The songstress' self-penned "Hypnotized" and "Wish I Could" are standout tracks on this world-class vocal jazz opus.

Raised in Kansas City, Baby J'ai was writing songs at age 5 and sneaking into nightclubs at 8 to watch her guitarist father perform with the tip touring musicians of the time.

Under the guidance of mentor Phil Moore, Baby J'ai got her start as a jazz singer. She soon did a stint singing in nightclubs. Back home in the United States, she began experimenting with the washboard—traditionally a Cajun instrument in jazz and blues, calling it a "jazzboard."

"This recording is who I am," said Baby J'ai. "People sometimes try to put me in a bag as a jazz diva or a blues singer, but I'm actually both. As far as I'm concerned, jazz and blues are one thing; I wouldn't want to give up either."

With a thoroughly convincing voice, excellent songwriting skills, and the sort of experimentalism of Cassandra Wilson, Baby J'ai is definitely a rising star.

See Sweet Baby J'ai when she appears with saxophonist Tom Braxton this Sunday, May 9th at Martin & Weyrich Winery (formerly Martin Bros.) in Paso Robles. The noon concert is brought to you by the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival. Tickets are \$18 advance (get 'em at Boo Boo's, the winery, or the Mozart Fest office) or \$20 at the door; persons 10 to 16 pay \$10; kids under 10 are free.

The New York Times

Friday, September 12, 2003

arts & entertainment



Honey and Soul
 By Ben Ratliff

Sweet Baby J'ai doesn't know all the answers to the questions life will pose, but she knows where to find them—in the blues. Music lovers will be hard-pressed to determine if Sweet Baby J'ai is a jazz or blues singer—she does both with equal aplomb. Her voice is part cream, part honey, and all soul. "Music is my soul. It sort of takes me up and answers all of my questions," the jazz and blues singer said. "It's like when your grandmother puts on old blues records. You'll have all the answers you'll ever need. That's why music has prevailed through the centuries."

As one of the musicians performing at this year's NYC Women In Jazz Festival, Sweet Baby will bring to New York the music that sprung from her roots. She blends the jazz attribute of improvisation with the storytelling of blues to build on the Kansas City tradition. Sweet Baby also extends the sounds of jazz and blues by using the washboard in some of her Latin-inspired tunes. A remarkable musician, acclaimed vocalist, producer and arranger, who has shared the stage with such artists as Joe Williams, Etta James, and Joe Sample, Sweet Baby J'ai is highly recommended.

L.A. WEEKLY
 June 5, 2003

Los Angeles — The Playboy Jazz Festival returns to the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza on June 8, 2 p.m., for an afternoon of free music featuring the Grammy-winning sounds of saxman Emie Watts and his Quartet along with the impassioned vocals of Sweet Baby J'ai. The mall is at 3650 W. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., across from Magic Johnson Theatres. Two-time Grammy winner, Emie Watts' latest release on Sampson Records, "Classic Moods," offers a strong sense of melody with a catchy blues base.

Vocalist Sweet Baby J'ai is an acclaimed jazz and blues performer whose latest release, "Evolution,"

**Sweet Baby J'ai Headlines the
 Playboy Concert**

showcases her talents as a composer, producer and arranger. This Kansas City native began writing songs at the young age of 5 and her style is noted in the Kansas City sound. "Evolution" features some of today's hottest musicians as well as legendary saxophonist, Teddy Edwards, and renowned trumpeter, Oscar Brashear.

The concert is part of Playboy's free community event series leading up to the 25th annual Playboy Jazz Festival on June 15-16 at the Hollywood bowl.

Gates open at noon and the music begins at 2 p.m. The public is encouraged to bring lawn chairs.



Sweet Baby J'ai
 For more information, call (310) 449-4070

MUSIC CONNECTION MAY 27-JUNE 9, 2002



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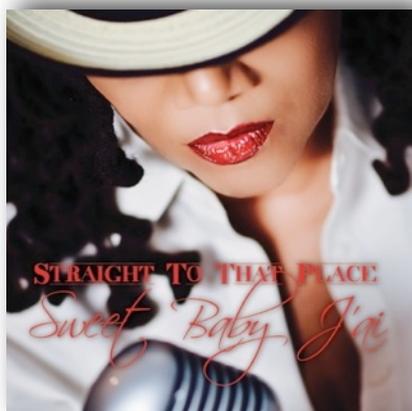


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MUSIC



STRAIGHT TO THAT PLACE
SMG RECORDS 2016
[LISTEN ON ITUNES](#)



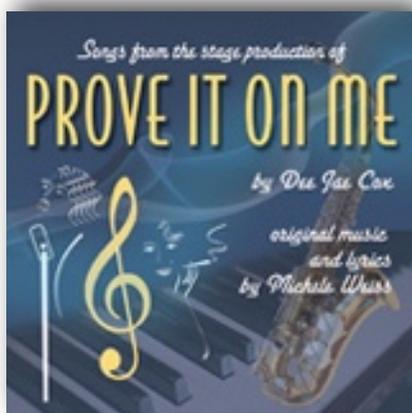
FOR JAZZ VOCAL FANS ONLY
TERASHIMA/DIW RECORDS 2015
[LISTEN ON AMAZON](#)



BLACK MAGIC WOMAN
SMG RECORDS 2014
[LISTEN ON ITUNES](#)



INTRODUCING J'AI MICHEL
SMG RECORDS 2008
[LISTEN ON ITUNES](#)



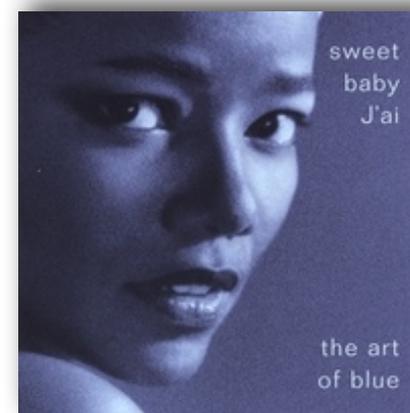
PROVE IT ON ME
SOUNDTRACK 2008
[LISTEN ON SOUNDCLLOUD](#)



JAZZ BABY - SESSION 1
CASABLANCA RECORDS 2005
[LISTEN ON AMAZON](#)



EVOLUTION
SMG RECORDS 2003
[LISTEN ON ITUNES](#)



THE ART OF BLUE
SMG RECORDS 1998
[LISTEN ON ITUNES](#)

V I D E O S

[SWEET BABY J'AI EPK VIDEO](#)



[BESSIE BILLIE AND RUTH SHORT FILM](#)



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[STRAIGHT TO THAT PLACE](#)



[ALMOST LIKE BEING IN LOVE](#)



[PERPETRATING FREAK](#)



STRAIGHT TO THAT PLACE

LATEST RELEASE



Release Date: September 21, 2016

Catalog #: SMG 5124

Format: CD

UPC: 6 44420 51249 3

File Under: Vocal Jazz

SRLP: \$14.99

Wholesale Price \$9.90

Website: www.sweetbabyjai.com



TRACK LISTING

1. Feeling Good
2. Feva (Fever)
3. Straight To That Place (Straight No Chaser)
4. Killer Joe - Sweet and Low
5. When You're In Love
6. Black Magic Woman
7. That's All
8. Scofield's Blues
9. Call My Name
10. Girl From Ipanema
11. I'm Consumed
12. Rock Me B.B..
13. Feeling Good (Still)



- National Press Mailing
- Radio Promotion Campaign
- Print Ads & Digital Promotion
- Tour throughout 2016 and 2017
- In-Store play copies available

STRAIGHT TO THAT PLACE is Sweet Baby J'ai's latest cd, produced by renowned pianist, arranger, producer Jane Getz, critically acclaimed singer, composer, producer Sweet Baby J'ai and Grammy award winning engineer, producer Bob Tucker, which showcases sublime offerings fusing jazz, blues, R&B and Latin. "I wanted to express what I've been going through in love and life, celebrate some of my favorite musicians and composers, and share some of my own compositions. Every note, every chord and every word tells a story!"

There are incredible nuances and bold statements happening simultaneously on Sweet Baby J'ai's current album, **STRAIGHT TO THAT PLACE**. Respected for her considerable gifts as a vocalist and songwriter, J'ai's original compositions draw us in with their openhearted lyrics, working into our consciousness and taking us to wondrous places. She breathes new life into classics with great reinterpretations giving us a new scope to appreciate timeless songs with a different perspective. Her deeply soulful vocals are infectious, and the stellar support by musicians Mimi Fox, Nolan Shaheed, Jane Getz, Karen Hammack, Chris Colangelo, Peter Buck, Carol Chaikin, Bob Tucker and others are electrifying. **STRAIGHT TO THAT PLACE**, delivers on what it promises, taking its listeners straight to wonderland. This is an outstanding album!

C O N T A C T S

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Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival

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