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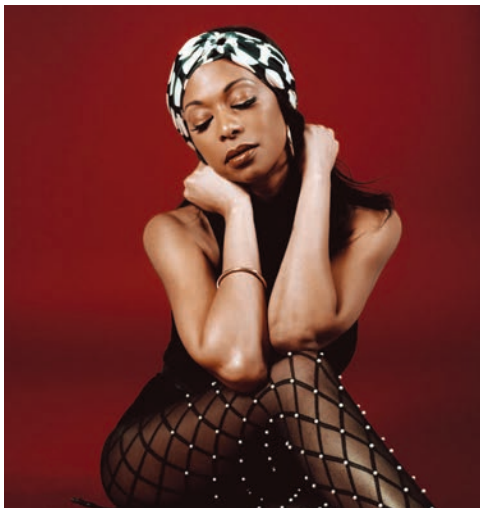




▶ ACANTHA LANG'S MUSICAL talent was apparent from an early age, but it wasn't until she moved to New York that she found the right community to help her flourish. "My hometown, New Orleans, is a musical city so I believe that it was always in my bones," she says, while checking in from her current flat in London. "It just needed to be awakened, and that happened in New York."

After performing at the Harlem Grill alongside accomplished R&B session musicians, Lang was selected to be the first female MC at New York cabaret hotspot The Box. "It was amazing," she reflects. "All the celebrities came there. I used to be on after Reggie Watts so we'd be backstage shooting the shit before he took the stage. We're still friends, and The Box was a big part of my New York experience."

That gig ultimately led her to London, where she formed her own band, polished her sound, assisted in opening The Box's U.K. sister venue and released



## ACANTHA LANG

*Searching for Soul Sugar*

her 2021 debut EP, *Sugar Woman*. Her first project—inspired by the film *Searching for Sugar Man*—showcases her ability to blend Stax-inspired funk with Southern blues, delivering head-on, lyrical vignettes that takes on a mix of contemporary topics.

Lang also built a dedicated

following during the COVID-19 pandemic through her online series, *Standing on the Shoulders Of...*, where she churns out classic soul covers. Her exceptional take on Nina Simon's "I Wish I Knew How I Would Feel to Be Free" landed her a McDonald's TV spot in Europe and is featured on her

upcoming full-length 13-track debut, *Beautiful Dreams*, which is set for release this month.

Lang's unique perspective and authentic, intentional voice have already won her accolades. The singer was accepted into the Recording Academy's 2022 member class, and her latest single, "It's Gonna Be Alright," was on the first-round ballots for three Grammy nominations.

"It's all a journey, a process—you have to be open to it and flexible with it," Lang muses. "The great songwriters that I've been in rooms with take the time to pay attention to what they are feeling in the moment. Bruno Major does that well. I learned a lot about crafting words and imagery to tell stories from him. Writing songs that have depth and authenticity is the goal. I want to make people feel inspired and hopeful because we've all been through things in our lives. If I can make music that moves people, then I'm winning."

Alex H. Krinsky

▶ AT 28, MATT JAFFE HAS already accomplished a lot. Discovered by Jerry Harrison at an open-mic night in 2015, the singer-songwriter rolled out his full-length debut, *Blast Off* at the tender age of 16, thanks to some guidance from the Talking Heads multi-instrumentalist. Shortly after, he participated in writing sessions with Chuck Prophet and Tom Higgenson of Plain White T's and, since then, he has traversed the nation, opening for Blues Traveler, Jackie Greene, Mavis Staples and others.

In addition to tracking half a dozen albums alongside a mix of Bay Area luminaries, Jaffe's most recent accolade is guesting beside Bob Weir during Sweetwater Music Hall's 50<sup>th</sup>-anniversary celebration, where he took on the 1965 Dylan classic, "Like a Rolling Stone." "He's been exceptionally generous with his influence, time and insight," Jaffe says, when asked about his time with Weir. "It would have been incredibly kind for him just to have had me up there in any capacity. So to go the extra mile to let me lead—it's just beyond."

Jaffe's sit-in arrived three weeks prior to the release of



## MATT JAFFE

*Dance-ready Deliberations*

his latest LP, *White Roses in the Snow*, a dance-ready set of eight songs that exemplify the artist's ability to deliver thoughtfully crafted lyrics set in a rock-and-roll framework. And, with little time to rest, he's already working

on his next project. "We just started mixing the new album," he admits.

"Perhaps not surprisingly, during the pandemic, my focus shifted toward recording music rather than playing live. I still

love performing and I seek it out, but recording has become a more direct channel to express what I want to say with music," Jaffe says. "There's a focus and precision that I can find in the studio that's more challenging to locate in a live setting. I've become more deliberate and proactive in my approach."

"The name of the new album is going to be *Gone Enough to Miss*," he adds. "The theme that I keep coming back to, even unintentionally, is the passage of time. Hence, the title of the next record—it's sort of an album about how much time lapses between the present day and significant life events. It is sort of about healing and the recognition that certain grief never ends. It might lessen, but there's no closure necessarily."

Needless to say, Jaffe's eagerness to continue his practice has departed from the regulatory responsibilities of an artist in favor of full-fledged infatuation. "To paraphrase the novelist John Irving, who wrote one of my favorite books, *Hotel New Hampshire*, 'You have to get obsessed and stay obsessed,'" he says. "That's how I feel about working on these songs."

Hana Gustafson