

## Roberta Donnay - What's Your Story (2006)

Written by bluesever

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01. *What's Your Story, Morning Glory?* 02. *No Regrets* 03. *Put It Where You Want It* 04. *Small Day Tomorrow* 05. *Stop This Train!* 06. *Devil May Care* 07. *Life In The Slow Lane* 08. *Dont Let The Sun Catch You Cryin'* 09. *If You Live* 10. *Drinkin' Again* 11. *Blue Monk* 12. *Dindi (English Lyric Version)* Roberta Donnay – vocals Eric Reed – piano Gerald Cannon – bass Mark Taylor – drums Dave Ellis - tenor saxophone (3,6,8,10)

Bay Area singer Roberta Donnay has an unusual past for a jazz vocalist. She already has several albums and a fan base, but according to her website these songs have been in the category of electro-chill-ambient jazz, smooth jazz, trance music, acid jazz, etc. Her initial jazz vocal experience was at the 2003 Monterey Jazz Festival, where she appeared with saxophonist Dave Ellis (who appears on this album), but *What's Your Story* is her first recorded venture in jazz singing.

A personage as important in the music industry as Orrin Keepnews has provided a lengthy and enthusiastic endorsement of Donnay as a primo jazz singer, and this comes from someone who has recorded several legendary artists. Finally, Donnay's biography information notes several times that she is a multiple Grammy Award nominee, but nowhere is there any indication of how she was so honored.

But disregarding the background information, this is a pretty good showcase for the vocalist. Given it's her first album not concentrating on original material, the selections are largely familiar, providing a reasonably good yardstick to measure her vocals with. Roberta Donnay has a definite edge to her voice and, yes, she does sound a bit like Billie Holiday on several tracks. Notably, she begins with Mary Lou Williams' "What's Your Story, Morning Glory?" and Tobias/Ingraham's "No Regrets," which are associated with Lady Day. Bob Dorough's "Small Day Tomorrow" offers a more sophisticated cafe-type ballad, as does the Mercer/Tauber piece

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"Drinkin' Again," which I still have trouble associating with anyone but Dinah Washington.

Donnay's attitude is just right for Mose Allison's caustic "If You Live" and, as a Mose-o-phile, I have to say that her original, "Stop This Train," is a dead ringer for the even more sarcastic Allison original, "Stop This World," from his 1962 album *Swingin' Machine*. Donnay shows her jazz chops with her take on Abbey Lincoln's lyrics set to "Blue Monk" (here called "Monkery's The Blues"). Donnay saves one more goodie from this album: an up-tempo take on Bob Dorough's "Devil May Care," with a booting tenor sax intro from Ellis. Wasn't Dorough the original vocalist who sang this in the mid-1950s on Bethlehem? ---Michael P. Gladstone, [allaboutjazz.com](http://allaboutjazz.com)

Roberta Donnay has been on the music scene for some time, but this session marks a return to her first love, jazz. Produced by Orrin Keepnews and surrounded by a strong rhythm section anchored by pianist Eric Reed, Donnay's somewhat edgy soprano has a pop sensibility at times (especially in Al Jarreau's "Put It Where You Want It") but she's in total control in this diverse CD. Highlights include a pair of songs by Bob Dorough ("Small Day Tomorrow" and "Devil May Care"), a sassy take of Mary Lou Williams' "What's Your Story, Morning Glory?" (with a blues-drenched solo by Reed) and a strutting interpretation of Mose Allison's "If You Live." Tenor saxophonist Dave Ellis is added on several tracks, contributing a heartfelt solo in the unjust obscurity "Drinkin' Again." Roberta Donnay and jazz fans alike will benefit from her jazz comeback. ---Ken Dryden, Rovi

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