

Carol Mennie vocals

Dom Minasi 6 string, 12 string & electric guitars

Patience Higgins reeds

Valery Ponomarev trumpet & flugelhorn

Michael Jefry Stevens piano & string synthesizer

Tomas Ulrich cello

Ken Filiano bass

Jay Rosen drums

Tom McGrath percussion, bongos & marimba

1. **Jazz, Jazz, Jazz** 3:57
(Dom Minasi) D.O.M. Music Pub., ASCAP
2. **You Don't Know What Love Is** 8:48
(De Paul & Raye) Universal MCA Music Publishing, ASCAP
3. **He Was To Good to Me** 4:53
(Rogers & Hart) Warner Bros Music Pub, ASCAP
4. **Willow Weep for Me** 4:52
(Ann Ronell) Ann Ronell MUSIC, ASCAP
5. **Brown Eyes** 5:48
(Dom Minasi) D.O.M. Music Pub., ASCAP
6. **I'm Not A Sometime Thing** 4:46
(Dom Minasi) D.O.M. Music Pub., ASCAP
7. **In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning** 5:16
(Hillard & Mann) Better Half Music Co. & RYTVOC Inc., ASCAP
8. **Who Needs You** 5:19
(Dom Minasi) D.O.M. Music Pub., ASCAP
9. **Too Long at The Fair** 4:50
(W.C. Barnes) Tylerson Music Co., ASCAP
10. **Angela** 5:35
(Dom Minasi) D.O.M. Music Pub., ASCAP
11. **Lover Man** 3:24
(Davis, Ramirez & Sherman) Universal MCA Music Publishing, ASCAP

Total Running Time: 57:39

Arranged & Produced by Dom Minasi



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Carol Mennie

I'm Not A Sometime Thing

CDM 1004

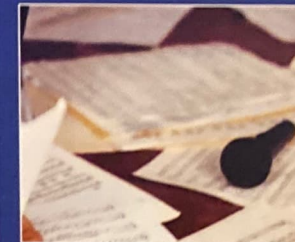
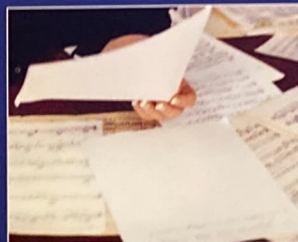
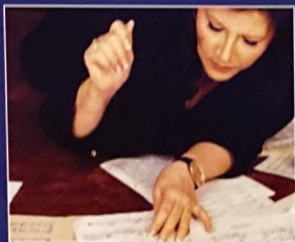
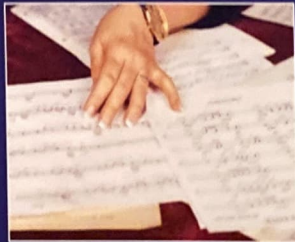


Carol Mennie *I'm Not A Sometime Thing*



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CDM 1004
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DIGITAL AUDIO



If you've spent time absorbing Dom Minasi's 2003 release *Time Will Tell*, you are familiar with the buoyant singing of Carol Mennie, Minasi's wife of four years. On that album, backed by acoustic guitar, cello and double bass, Mennie put her stamp on a mournful arrangement of Thelonious Monk's "Round Midnight." She rightly received plaudits for her "authoritative alto," her "smoky-velvety élan," her "microtonal lyrical expression." Little did the reviewers know that Mennie already had an entire album on the shelf.

Recorded in 1999, *I'm Not a Sometime Thing* is the fruit of Mennie and Minasi's 15-year musical and romantic partnership. The two worked in varying contexts at the Village Gate, J's and Birdland (the 105th Street incarnation), subbed for Houston Person and Etta Jones at the Blue Note, and even played a late-'90s Christmas ball at the Clinton White House. Over time their repertoire grew and grew, even as gigging opportunities shrank. Both ultimately agreed that it was time to do a recording.

The sessions were successful, but the release would have to wait. "Dom got a chance to record for CIMP," says Mennie, referring to her husband's 1999 disc *Finishing Touches*. "Suddenly people were discovering Dom again with his 'out' music. He wanted to put our record out and I'm the one that stopped it. I thought it wasn't a good idea. I thought, let's just leave it alone until Dom's own thing happens. Then his thing snowballed with *Takin' the Duke Out* [2001], *Goin' Out Again* [2002] and *Time Will Tell*. Finally there was kind of a lull and Dom said, 'We're putting this thing out!'"

Mennie's background is in theater, and she comes across in conversation as a born performer. But her stage career hasn't always involved singing, and she didn't become immersed in jazz until she met Minasi, who one day innocently offered to come over and restring her guitar. "Dom just said, 'Do you know this tune?'" recalls Mennie. "It started like that." Soon she got to know vocalists such as Judy Barnett and Anne Marie Moss, and she was awed by the great Shirley Horn. "When I heard her, I flipped," Mennie says. Minasi hears echoes of Horn in his wife's approach to slow tempos.

"I made my living playing for singers from the time I was 18 or 19 years old," says Minasi, who, after a long hiatus, recently became a fixture on New York's avant-garde circuit. Fans of Minasi the free-jazzer will be surprised to hear his five original songs here, and even more surprised to see that he wrote their lyrics as well. How does an "out" player like Minasi arrive at the sunny, show-tune-like "Jazz, Jazz, Jazz" or the tongue-in-cheek Brazilian number "Who Needs You"? "After playing 'out' for two or three weeks, I've had enough," Minasi explains. "Because some of it is very dark. It's fun, but then I need a break, and I love playing pretty, harmonic things." Minasi's songs also serve an expressive purpose. "We're both very volatile," offers Mennie, "and every time we had an argument,

Dom would write a song. Instead of candy or flowers, I got these wonderful songs. It turned out to be the most prolific period of his straight ahead songwriting career." The couple even survived a year-long breakup. Love and music conquer all.

This music gains rich timbral contrast thanks in part to Minasi's acoustic guitars (six- and 12-string). Adding still more timbres are the members of Minasi's DDT trio, cellist Tomas Ulrich and bassist Ken Filiano. Both, like Minasi, are strongly associated with avant-garde jazz. So too are drummer Jay Rosen and pianist Michael Jefry Stevens. "These guys can all play straightahead," says Minasi. "They're all coming from the same place." The band also includes reedist (and neighbor) Patience Higgins, percussionist Tom McGrath and hardbop trumpeter Valery Ponomarev, an alumnus of Art Blakey's *Jazz Messengers*.

Minasi locates the inspiration for "Brown Eyes" in jazz classics like "Soul Eyes" and "Angel Eyes," songs with "that minor sound." "Brown Eyes" began life as an instrumental but later acquired lyrics dedicated to Carol. "I don't have brown eyes," she says with a smirk. "But he'd already copyrighted the title." The bolero-influenced "Angela" has a far sadder story: at a gig one night, a friend named Angela heard and enjoyed an instrumental version of the song. She died in a car crash soon afterward, and Minasi renamed the song in her honor. But the lyrics were inspired years later when Carol & Dom had to rehearse and perform together while romantically separated.

The cover arrangements, all by Minasi, offer new twists on songs both familiar and obscure. "Willow Weep for Me" is almost always heard as a bluesy ballad; here it's a fractured funk stomp. "You Don't Know What Love Is" is colored by unusual static-harmony passages, while "Lover Man" becomes a fast jazz waltz. Less common are Hilliard & Mann's "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning," Rodgers & Hart's "He Was Too Good to Me" and Billy Barnes's "Too Long at the Fair." The last, an early '60s vehicle for Barbra Streisand, "is the saddest song I've heard in my life," says Mennie. "I asked Dom if he could do something to make it sound faded and twisted, you know, how people twist things in their head. I wanted it to sound crooked and 'off.'"

As the present title suggests, we can expect to hear more from the bubbly, outgoing Carol Mennie. "I have at least 40 arrangements for Carol, easy," says Minasi. "I have duos, trios, quartets, quintets and up to 10 pieces for Carol. I've already started working on the music for the next one."

David Adler

Contributing writer – Jazz Times, Down Beat