

The New York Times

A Jazzy Tribute to Dad, With the Accent on Swing

NEW YORK TIMES

By STEPHEN HOLDEN

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The jazz singer and sometime actress **Sarah Partridge** is an intriguing product of what might be called musical home schooling. When she was 5, she recalls in her breezy new show, her father, a jazz fan, played June Christy's recording of "Great Scot," an innocuously playful swinger by Mildred Kirkham, whose lyrics proclaim, "Great Scot/Look what I got/I got a lover!" The song stuck with her the way nursery rhymes remain embedded in memory.

"Great Scot" is the opening number in Ms. Partridge's "Songs for My Father," which inaugurated the fall cabaret season on Tuesday night at the Oak Room of the Algonquin on an uncharacteristically jazzy note.

All the songs on the program are associated in one way or another with her father. "The Folks Who Live on the Hill" was her parents' engagement song. She relates "Stars Fell on Alabama" to her culture shock when her family moved from Boston to Alabama. She discovered Stevie Wonder's "You and I" in the 1970's and introduced it to her father, who also came to love it.

The program's most reflective number is "You Are There," the Johnny Mandel-David Frishberg memorial to a loved one whose ghost turns up at odd moments. The set also includes one well-made original, "Dancing in My Mind."

Ms. Partridge belongs to a tradition of jazz singers who use hard rhythm as a kind of emotional armor. Instead of exploring the interior worlds of her material, she sustains the image of a plucky, can-do gal and good sport who swings at a steady jogging pace, assisted by Bill Moring on bass, Tim Horner on drums and Allen Farnham on piano.

At the opening show her voice suggested an unlikely fusion of Nanette Fabray and Anita O'Day: Ms. Fabray for the upbeat talky quality of her enunciation and sometimes fluttery vibrato and intonation, and Ms. O'Day for the bedrock swing propelling her scat improvisations. That rhythmic security is Ms. Partridge's strongest asset.

Sarah Partridge performs through Saturday at the Algonquin, 59 West 44th Street; (212) 419-9331.



By Siddhartha Mitter, Globe Correspondent | January 5, 2007

NEW YORK -- The Algonquin Hotel here is one of the grand names in a certain kind of jazz: the elegant, debonair, supper-club kind, in which a well-put-together crowd gathers to enjoy the timeless offerings of the Great American Songbook.

Yet neither the venue nor the material can be taken for granted these days. Many once-grand jazz spaces have been given over to schlock or turned into tourist-driven money machines, if they survive at all. And the great songs made famous by Cole Porter, Ella Fitzgerald, and company aren't exactly the freshest of fare.

So when Sarah Partridge, a committed songbook performer who has become a presence on the national torch-song circuit, selects the Algonquin lobby bar as an interview location, she's taking a cultural stand, low-key yet determined.

Partridge, who regularly plays the hotel's Oak Room, is a jazz striver: a singer who found her calling comparatively late and honed her craft in a genre full of potential pitfalls, all the while raising a family. She's been rewarded for her perseverance with three albums and a growing reputation. She makes her Boston debut at Scullers on Wednesday.

Partridge -- who was born in Brookline and lived in Weston into her teens -- is well aware of the risks in taking on standards, and the paucity of new material that mines the same sensibility.

"There's not a lot of new stuff," she says. "Luckily there's a lot of the old stuff. But let's face it, it does tend to be done again and again. You have to try to find your own voice. This is the way the music is evolving. It's demanding reinterpretations, which are sometimes good and sometimes not."

On Partridge's latest album, "You Are There: Songs From My Father," the arrangements are warm and well paced; her delivery is crisp and lean yet never runs cold. Her takes on songs such as "Stormy Monday Blues" and "Stars Fell on Alabama" are neither rehashes nor deconstructions, a vital balance if the songs are to retain both freshness and identity.

An encounter straight from showbiz lore got Partridge her start. Out one night for drinks with some girlfriends, she succumbed to their pleas that she try a karaoke number. She scoured the song list for one she felt comfortable attempting. Suddenly she was onstage doing "Summertime." A guy came up, introduced himself as a jazz booker . . .

And a star was born, sort of. "I didn't become Diana Krall right then and there, but it started the ball rolling," Partridge says. "It got me working with great musicians and doing this music I loved, and I realized I could do it."

That wasn't the first quirky moment in Partridge's career. She began as an actress, studying theater at Northwestern University, and her first role came playing the baby sitter in the 1983 hit movie "Risky Business," which, somewhat more famously, introduced a young actor named Tom Cruise.

Partridge's two scenes opposite Cruise seem destined to follow her around as a sort of signature anecdote. Not that she's complaining.

"As a first job, it was pretty cool," she says. "Most of it ended up on the cutting room floor, but I did end up in it for two scenes, kissing Tom Cruise, so how bad can that be?"

Yet after this start, Partridge struggled in the movie industry. "Put it this way," she says, "I supported myself most years." That meant doing cartoon and commercial voice - overs and TV pilots and maintaining a part-time job.

So her music break, at age 32, came at an opportune time.

"I wasn't getting many acting roles anymore," Partridge says. "I had turned 30, and at that point the acting roles, if you're not famous, are starting to dwindle."

From her Hollywood days, however, Partridge retained a tenacity that would serve her well on the slow road to recognition as a jazz singer, paying dues in a difficult, even hidebound genre with scant commercial prospects.

Along the way she married her fiance, a television producer, and had two sons, now 11 and 8. The duties of motherhood only compounded her load.

"The family thing and being a little older is probably not on my side," she says. "What I should be doing more of is traveling, because this music is so prevalent in Europe and Japan. And I've made a decision not to go away from my family for a month at a time. But it hasn't stopped me from making albums and keeping a career going."

In fact, as a classic songbook singer, Partridge has chosen a field where the life experience that comes with age adds depth to the material -- indeed, might even be considered a prerequisite for soulful delivery.

"I feel that if you're going to sing and be my age, you might as well sing this music, because people take you more seriously when you're older," she says.

Her new album is a case in point. It is a tribute to her deceased father, and the one original song, the affecting "Dancing in My Mind," finds her reminiscing on childhood memories, and on loss, from a grown-up, philosophical perspective. That same perspective pervades Partridge's outlook on her somewhat non-traditional, yet largely happy career.

"My aspirations are high, they always have been," she says. "But I'm more realistic now than I have been. I'm just on a journey now. It used to be about the goal. Interestingly enough, now that I'm not thinking so much about the goal, bigger things are happening."



This album pays tribute to the memory of her beloved father, Lawrence Partridge, in a swinging journey through some of the classic songs of the last century that her father loved plus some songs that he would have loved to hear Sarah sing. His daughter even wrote one song especially for him. With effervescent arrangements featuring spontaneous improvisations and interplay between Partridge and her bandmates, *You are There* is a feel-good foray into the joys of small-group swing and classic jazz songs. AllAboutJazz.com

The Star-Ledger

South Orange based Sarah Partridge is a jazz singer who has an open, clear voice, a solid rhythmic sense and a feeling for the best material. The 14 tune program is filled with evergreens done in a personal manner. For instance, "Almost Like Being In Love, usually a swinger, has a surprising floating quality, which Partridge handles deftly. "How Long Has This Been Going On?" is refreshingly done as a bossa, and Partridge fills "Haunted Heart" with emotion. Pianists Allen Farnham and Larry Ham, guitarists Bucky Pizzarelli and Gene Bertoncini and drummers Rich DeRosa and Sherrie Maricle are among the A-1 supporting crew. -- **ZAN STEWART**

Dan Singer, from "Singer's Singers"...

Sarah returns after too long an absence on records with 14 standards guaranteed to satisfy. Selective extraordinary arrangements are heard throughout. Lerner and Lowe's "Almost Like Being In Love" is crooned as a slow winding dirge. It's as if the song is heard for the very first time and it becomes even more of a classic. Her preliminary scat on Chatman's "Every Day I Have The Blues" builds to a pleasurable musical explosion. Gershwin's "How Long Has This Been Going On" races along with a subtle scat to a fine conclusion. Her take here is delicate yet zippy and wide eyed. "Haunted Heart" (Dietz/Schwartz) contains exactly the right amount of softness and vocal tenderness and caring. Here is one enormously gifted songbird who can really deliver on every kind of song. Oh how I await the master-singer's next CD. May I not have to wait so long!

The logo for the Chicago Tribune, featuring the words "Chicago Tribune" in a white, serif font on a dark blue rectangular background.

The 'Risky Business' babysitter is all grown up as a jazz singer

By Richard Knight Jr
Copyright 2005, [Chicago Tribune](#)

For Sarah Partridge...the road to a jazz singing career started in movies and took a detour during a karaoke night.

It began in the summer of 1982, when Partridge...spent two weeks as a fantasy babysitter-filming a role for the Tom Cruise movie "Risky Business."

It didn't seem like a career track that would find her moving from movie sets to the band stage-until she ended up in a karaoke bar with some friends in 1991 and took a dare to get up.

"I said, 'I don't do this, I don't sing these pop songs,'" Partridge recalls. But she found a version of "Summertime" to sing-and a booking agent happened to be in the audience and signed her up. Partridge established a second career as a jazz singer.

Partridge gradually left acting behind and concentrated on music. She married a television producer and has released two CDs, 1998's "I'll Be Easy to Find" (USA Music Group) and 2003's "Blame It on My Youth" (Nagel-Heyer).

But Partridge hasn't forgotten about "Risky Business."

She's tickled her scene's memorable line, "Joel, get off the babysitter" still resonates with fans, and that Cruise remembers their time together.

Partridge ran into him occasionally while living in Los Angeles and they would chat. Last summer, her husband Gary Stein, who works for "Good Morning America," had Cruise on the show and gave him a copy of Partridge's latest CD. Cruise sent Partridge a note of congratulations a week later offering compliments on the CD.



...These are great songs, and Sarah Partridge owns a great voice. Her enthusiasm for the material brings new life to some old classics. They don't write them like this anymore and very few can sing them like Sarah does. Enjoy!"

[Tony Perkins, Music Correspondent, Good Morning America](#)

The Birmingham News

Partridge... is in many ways... still is a young singer, doing it professionally only for a decade or so. But she has leaped in that short time to the front of girl jazz singers. Partridge takes every lyric and caresses it, understanding that songs like this must be a perfect blend of music and lyrics. All in all, a nearly perfect package, a CD that can be listened to again and again. -- *Garland Reeves, The Birmingham (AL) News*

L.A. JAZZ SCENE

April, 1998

SARAH PARTRIDGE, I'll Be Easy To Find, USA Music Group, No. 1055

Some of you may remember Sarah. She lived in Los Angeles in the early 1990s and sang with many local musicians, including pianists John Rodby, Dick Shreve and Jon Mayer, in such venues as Lunaria, the Loewi's Santa Monica Beach Hotel and the Hollywood landmark, the Cinegrill. However Sarah spent most of her childhood in Boston, attended high school in Alabama and college in Chicago. She is now a New York singer, not just geographically but also aurally and, if there is such a thing as a Manhattan look, Sarah has it.

We are currently blessed with many wonderfully refreshing young female singers, such as Diana Krall, Karin Allyson and Claire Martin, just to identify a few. And in the March issue of the L.A. Jazz Scene I reviewed Tierney Sutton's excellent debut album. So, can it be that we are experiencing a golden age of jazz-influenced women singers? Well, Sarah Partridge's debut CD adds some fuel to that argument. It is not only a good debut; it is a wonderful album of seventeen well-chosen songs, a fine balance between the familiar and the unexpected. There are no weak tracks.

Sarah is an exceptional young singer with a sensuous brunette voice, if I may coin such a phrase. She has the ability to project a lyric with intimacy and warmth, An intelligent singer, she has exceptional facility with ballads, singing them with reserve, yet at the same time transmitting an aura of great emotional depth. She brings out what theater folk call the subtext, suddenly making the listener aware that the sometimes trite lyrics indicate very real situations. Sarah's phrasing is also enhanced by her perfect diction. Her superb version of the seldom performed title song "I'll Be Easy to Find" is a perfect example of her many vocal gifts. In fact, this Bart Howard song alone is worth the price of the CD. Sarah's relaxed and unpretentious phrasing is also heard to great advantage on the better known "My One and Only Love." Her version compares well to the previous John Coltrane-Johnny Hartman classic recording, as well as the earlier rendition by Frank Sinatra.

Some singers become so identified with a song that no one thereafter will touch it. "Something Cool" is a prime example; it belongs to June Christy, doesn't it? Well, maybe not. Sarah is enough of a song actress to become, for

at least four minutes, the Blanche Dubois-like heroine of that memorable Billy Barnes composition. (That is not too surprising since Sarah was in the popular movie *Risky Business* with Tom Cruise, as well as appearing in other films and TV shows.) Another example is the Bob Dorough song "Small Day Tomorrow" which is closely identified with Irene Kral, who introduced it in her now classic 1977 LP, "Kral Space."

Sarah's version won't make you forget Irene but that is not her intent. She generates her own brand of magic with those poetic Fran Landesman lyrics. Composer Harold Arlen is represented three times, once by the free and easy "Any Place I Hang My Hat Is Home," once by the evergreen "One for My Baby," with its marvelous Mercer lyric, and finally with a swinging version of "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues."

Special mention should be given to Dick Shreve's "Bourbon Rain." Sarah's recording of this composition, which reminds me a little of Doris Tauber's "Drinking Again" (popularized by Sinatra), is the first recording of this chilling torch song.

Ballads dominate Sarah's debut album, but she displays superb timing and joyfulness on such up tempo numbers as Ronnell Bright's "Don't Call It Love," a cute song that Sarah swings with ease. Another charming jump tune is a finger-snapping rendition of Harry Warren's "About a Quarter to Nine." She also exercises her considerable rhythmic skills on the jazz staple "Kiss and Run." The opening cut "Great Scot," by a woman named Mildred Kirkham, is new to me. It also is an excellent up-tempo tune.

There is something else about this debut that needs stating, and that is the high quality of the instrumental accompaniment. Pianist Tony Monte, reed man Frank Wess and guitarists Gene Bertoncini and Bucky Pizzarelli have belonged for years to that small group of the elite who represent quality and professionalism. The fresh and just-right arrangements on this debut stem from the creative mind of Tony Monte. The technically flawless bass work is by Linc Milliman. The drummers are Terry Clark and Rich DeRosa and that's Mark Josefsberg at the vibes.

Based on this single debut CD alone, Sarah Partridge can unreservedly be placed alongside the best jazz-oriented singers. Let's hope that she quickly gains the national (and international) recognition she so richly deserves. As John Hoggland stated in his excellent liner notes "This album is appropriately titled. Sarah Partridge will be very easy to find."

I'm already looking forward to her next release.

* Highly recommended.

ROGER CRANE

NY Calling Cabaret

By William Wolf

It's always gratifying to hear an exciting vocalist who is moving up the star ladder. Tall, chic SARAH PARTRIDGE has it all--a striking voice, insight into how to interpret lyrics and a vibrant personality that communicates a sense of fun, wit and style. I thoroughly enjoyed catching her appearance at the Firebird. (See listing for the Firebird Cafe.) She needs to be brought back often for return engagements.

Partridge won over the opening night crowd immediately with her soul-deep rendition of "Every Day I Have the Blues." Her range of material is wide and she introduces numbers with well-chosen, entertaining comments. Partridge, who began as an actress, was in the film "Risky Business" and has also had considerable television experience. Once becoming committed to a singing career, she performed on many occasions with the late Doc

Cheatham and she salutes him as an important musical and personal influence. Her lessons have been well-learned; her command of blues and jazz is superb.

Joe Lang, NJ Jazz Society

My inclusion of reviews of albums which are not part of NJJS stock at the end of my monthly "Compact Views" column has led to much confusion. Despite my emphasizing that they are not available through NJJS, several orders each month include requests for non-stock CD's. In an attempt to alleviate this situation, I have decided to review the non-stock discs in a separate column, thus "Other Views."

Sarah Partridge is a singer with an initial album titled [I'll Be Easy to Find](#). One listen to this [disc](#) and you will be hoping that she is easy to find. This is an impressive first outing. She has chosen a program of seventeen terrific tunes, and has surrounded herself with a stellar grouping of musicians headed by pianist and arranger Tony Monte. The other players include Frank Wess on sax and flute, guitarists Bucky Pizzarelli, Gene Bertoncini and Karl Schloz, Mark Josefsberg on vibes. Linc Milliman on bass, with the drum chair being shared by Terry Clarke and Rich DeRosa.

There are many highlights and no weak tracks. The title song is a rarely heard, but excellent piece from the pen of Bart Howard. "My One and Only Love" has received countless recordings since Frank Sinatra introduced it in the early 50's, but few have approached his reading. Now we have one that comes close. It also takes courage to record a song that has been as closely associated with an artist as "Something Cool" has been with June Christy.

Her hip take on Lennon and McCartney's "Norwegian Wood" makes you realize that this is a song that might sneak into the repertoire of other popular singers once they hear what Partridge does with it. I could go on and on, but will call attention to only one more selection, Irving Berlin's too often ignored "Moonshine Lullaby," which Partridge has used to close this outstanding debut album.



Sarah Partridge
Cabaret at Odette's, New Hope, PA.
Saturday, May 19, 2001

Sarah Partridge, a relative newcomer to the cabaret stage, is primarily known as a jazz vocalist who has played all the big New York City clubs. Partridge recently brought her stylings to the ODETTES.

Her show was well constructed and provided the listening audience with a mixture of songs sung with a straight forward cabaret style and a more free wheeling jazz tone. She is an expressive singer who can belt if necessary and can scat with the best singers, but most of the time has a delicate approach to her material gliding elegantly through a song.

Partridge was raucous on the opening tune, "Happy Days are Here Again" but quickly brought it down to a more mellow tone on the Gershwin song, "How Long has this Been Going On." Most impressive was Partridge's slow jazzy version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein song from "Oklahoma," "A Girl Who Can't Say No."

Partridge, in a wonderful alto voice, offered a stylized version of "Something Good," another Rodgers and Hammerstein tune, this one from the film version of "The Sound of Music." Partridge has a knack for putting together a show that encompasses the lyrical refinement of both jazz and cabaret. She gave us some wonderful scat on "This Can't Be Love," some toe tapping, finger snapping blues on the Joe Williams song, "Everyday, I Have The Blues" and a straight forward but wonderful rendition of the story song, "Guess Who I Saw Today." She sings freely and authoritatively on her signature tunes, "Black Coffee" and "Crazy."

With Alan Farnham on piano offering finely polished arrangements to match her luminous voice and Matthew Parrish on bass, Partridge's show was a knockout. If I had any criticism, it would be that she should have had her accompanists perform fewer solos and fill that time with more of her own vocal talents. I felt cheated after the third instrumental solo in thinking that I could be hearing more of the terrific Sarah Partridge.