



Q & A with Lisa Hilton on Her New Album *Paradise Cove*

**Featuring Pianist Lisa Hilton, Trumpeter Igmar Thomas,
Bassist Luques Curtis and Drummer Obed Calvaire**

Available December 2 on Ruby Slippers Productions

Q: You've done three jazz trio albums since 2020: *More Than Another Day*, *Transparent Sky* and *Life Is Beautiful*. Tell us about your new L.I.L.O. Quartet and what inspired the format change in your band on your new album *Paradise Cove*?

LH: The last two years were difficult and anxious times as we all adjusted to a worldwide pandemic. Although I continued to compose and record, it was challenging just to find a studio as many were still closed. I wasn't ready to try anything new, so I focused on our trio work, but by 2022 I felt ready to try new things again. I realized that I hadn't worked in a quartet with trumpet – only with tenor sax – and I got excited about featuring the trumpet more. Our L.I.L.O. Quartet is the first letter of Lisa, Igmar, Luques and Obed, and it's my favorite band ever!

Q: Wow - that's good to hear after the stress of the last two years! Where did you record?

LH: In the past, I recorded several albums at Capitol Studios in Hollywood with my engineer Al Schmitt, but Capitol is now closed and my dear engineer has passed away. Since 2020 I have been working at The Village Studios in Santa Monica, California. The staff is friendly, the sound is terrific and I have a wonderful new engineering team too. Times have changed, but I'm thankful that I have been able to continue putting together strong creative teams of musicians, engineers and artists despite the challenges we faced. Each album is extremely collaborative, and I'm lucky to work with so many very talented people every year.

Q: Tell us a bit about your L.I.L.O. Quartet bandmates.

LH: I first played with **Luques Curtis** in 2018 at the Smithsonian in DC. He's a great bassist, and he's also grown a lot since we began working together. I love his soloing on this album! His roommate at Berklee College of Music was **Igmar Thomas**, so when I mentioned bringing in a new trumpeter, Igmar was a natural choice. There's an Americana energy at times to his

trumpet improvisations that fits well with my piano, so it was a real treat recording with him. I had been thinking about working with **Obed Calvaire** for about three years, so I'm glad he was able to join us for this session. Obed is a very creative drummer, and I think he sounds amazing on *Paradise Cove*. Recording an album is always a lot of work, but we had great energy in the studio, and that resulted in some explosive playing – I bet you can actually 'hear' the enjoyment we had!

Q: I noticed you've chosen two interesting cover tunes for this album – Dizzy Gillespie's "Birks' Works," and then the popular Burt Bacharach/Hal David tune "What the World Needs Now is Love." How did those choices come about?

LH: I'm pretty interested in mid-century music where jazz, folk, and the beginnings of rock and roll commingled with a bit with pop. The classic jazz tune "Birks' Works" was written in 1957. It's a favorite piece that also allowed our band to light some improvisational fireworks! As for the Bacharach... I'm always reading about musicians, and my sister recently gave me a book that delved into his life and work. Reading that Bacharach sprinkled jazz ideas and harmonies in his pop compositions, led me to try playing some of his tunes. I read that originally Bacharach and his lyricist, Hal David, didn't feel "What the World Needs Now is Love" was very strong, but since they recorded it in 1965 it's been a song for the ages. I asked Igmar to use muted trumpet and I played the piano in a lower octave in this spare arrangement to communicate its timeless petition for peace. These two very different cover songs were both created by mid-century American compositional masters, and they seem to me to bookend that fertile musical era that also gave us in 1959 *Kind Of Blue* by Miles Davis, *Time Out* by Dave Brubeck and other jazz classics.

Q: What made you choose the title *Paradise Cove* for the album? Did you compose to that as a concept?

LH: I always let the music lead *me* – I never try and make my composing fit a specific idea or concept like you would a school assignment. Creativity comes from within, but you need to nurture it to see what it will form and where you will be led. While recording, I was struck by how exuberant, high spirited and lively some of the music sounded, while the quieter pieces have an essence that feels healing. The music of *Paradise Cove* feels like a refuge in our very complex world. A 'cove' is a safe or secluded spot and 'paradise' is a state of grace or beauty. We hope people everywhere will feel good when they listen to our music – if they do, that would be the greatest gift an artist or musician can give.

Q: It does seem that it we have a lot of new challenges in our world right now....

LH: Artists need to be in tune with what is happening globally and respond to that authentically, but we all need a break from the news too, right? We need to escape, revitalize, reboot and grow. It's important to find, or create, beauty around us – to nurture a little part of our day with that puts a smile on our face. Our music is inspired by different genres, eras, and cultures: it's jazz that is warm and familiar, but it's also new and uplifting – and it's got some awesome playing on it by my bandmates! We hope you love it!

***Paradise Cove* is out December 2, 2022 and available for pre-sale on November 2 on Amazon.com or Apple Music.**

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