

SAVANT

BARBARA MORRISON
featuring HOUSTON PERSON
I Wanna Be Loved

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1. **PERDIDO** 3:01
(J. Tizol / E.M. Drake / H. Lengsfelder) (Music Sales Corp.) ASCAP
 2. **I WANNA BE LOVED** 4:17
(J. Green / E. Heyman / B. Rose) (SONY/ATV Harmony) ASCAP
 3. **THIS TIME THE DREAM'S ON ME** 3:15
(J. Mercer / H. Arlen) (Warner Bros Music) ASCAP
 4. **I'LL CLOSE MY EYES** 5:12
(B. Reid / B. Kaye) (Peter Maurice Music) ASCAP
 5. **SHINY STOCKINGS** 4:14
(F. Foster) (Larry Spier Music) ASCAP
 6. **SKYLARK** 5:09
(J. Mercer / H. Carmichael) (The Johnny Mercer Foundation / Songs of Peer) ASCAP
 7. **WORK SONG** 5:23
(N. Adderley / O. Brown Jr.) (Upam Music) BMI
 8. **WHEN SUNNY GETS BLUE** 5:09
(M. Fisher / J. Segal) (SONY/ATV Tunes) ASCAP
 9. **PLEASE SEND ME SOMEONE TO LOVE** 6:18
(P. Mayfield) (SONY/ATV Songs) BMI
 10. **SEPTEMBER IN THE RAIN** 3:33
(A. Dubin / H. Warren) (Warner Bros Inc.) ASCAP
 11. **MAKE ME A PRESENT OF YOU** 4:12
(J. Greene) (EMI U Catalog) ASCAP

HOUSTON PERSON

TENOR SAXOPHONE (EXCEPT TRACKS 2 & 4)

STUART ELSTER

PIANO

RICHARD SIMON

BASS

LEE SPATH

DRUMS

BARBARA MORRISON

VOCALS



Call it fate, kismet, or the inexorable attraction of two consummately soulful artists, but there's powerful mojo at work between vocalist Barbara Morrison and tenor saxophonist/producer Houston Person, who have come together in recent years to forge one of jazz's most reliably enthralling collaborations. This is their third recorded encounter for HighNote's sibling label Savant Records, following up on 2013's widely praised *A Sunday Kind of Love* (SCD 2128) and 2014's critically hailed *I Love You, Yes I Do* (SCD 2136).

I Wanna Be Loved picks up where they left off three years ago, with a blues-drenched program of standards and lesser known gems. Joining Morrison and her highly sympathetic working trio, Houston doesn't just parachute into proceedings as a hired horn. In addition to being one of the great tenor saxophonists of the past six decades, he's a connoisseur of vocalists, particularly singers so firmly rooted in the blues.

"That's what makes her so great," says Person, who's recorded prolifically as a leader for HighNote. "She respects the tradition of all those R&B singers, and some of that stuff still hasn't been explored. She covers it all from Bessie Smith forward. I enjoy playing with her because that's what I come out of. The blues is the foundation of everything. Once you get that you can go anywhere musically."

With his thick, buttery tone and crooner's insinuating phrasing, Person has stood out as an incisively lyrical player since his days

working in grits and gravy organ combos led by B-3 masters such as Don Patterson, Charles Earland, and particularly Johnny "Hammond" Smith, with whom he made his recording debut in 1963 (on the Riverside album *Mr. Wonderful*). His gift for communicating fundamental truths continues to resonate widely. He released his first album as a leader in 1966 with the Prestige session *Underground Soul!* and it's one of the foundational texts of the acid jazz movement that swept Europe and the US some four decades later. His long running and highly productive partnership with the great Etta Jones made Person the horn player most sought out by many of the music's singers and his work with Morrison constitutes another brilliant chapter in the epic blues/jazz story. She not only infuses everything she sings with an exquisite sense of soul, Morrison possesses a vast repertoire that encompasses dozens of almost forgotten treasures. No matter where she goes, she knows that Person is going to be right there with her.

"Houston gets ahold of the lyrics and learns them so he can tell the story," she says. "That's our job. You find most of the saxophone players who know the lyrics are just great. I'll start with James Moody. He knew all the songs and he could go all over the road map. Houston's like that. He knows how to leave little spaces for me to go into as a singer."

Morrison draws a good deal of the material on *I Wanna Be Loved* from her acclaimed Dinah Washington production of the same

name. An anguished *cri du coeur*, the title track reveals her deep empathic connection to Washington. “I haven’t been married as many times as she was, but I always felt like she did,” Morrison says. “Am I going to be lonely all my life? I don’t have any children. I ain’t got nobody. I relate to that song so much.” She puts an equally indelible stamp on the ballads “I’ll Close My Eyes” and “Make Me A Present of You,” songs that she also features in her Washington show (though Morrison notes that Ernie Andrews scored a hit with “Make Me” in 1953 before Dinah made the song her own). She also credits Andrews with inspiring her to add “Work Song” to her repertoire (“Ernie is one of my heroes,” she says). This version features spirited call and response between her fierce vocals and Person’s muscular tenor.

Part of what makes Morrison and Person’s partnership so effective is that she’s once again recording with her band featuring well-traveled veterans Stuart Elster (piano), Lee Spath (drums), and Richard Simon, who was often the bassist of choice for the late L.A. saxophone legends Buddy Collette and Teddy Edwards. She spent seven years performing with the trio weekly at the hotel Casa Del Mar in Santa Monica, and working with the group “is like putting on a pair of gloves,” she says. “I’ve been with them ever since. Every chance we have we get together. Stu works seven nights a week at all the hotels, and Lee has worked with everyone from Randy Crawford and Thelma Houston to Bettye LaVette and

Maria Muldaur. Richard used to be an English teacher, and he’s playing all the time. And I have my little center.”

She could simply rest on her laurels, but she’s turned her own adversity into a boon for the community with her Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center. After decades on the road she was diagnosed with diabetes, a cruel condition that led to the amputation of her legs. Determined to create an amenable situation at home, she founded the BMPAC in South L.A.’s thriving Leimert Park neighborhood. Far more than a venue, the center has grown into an invaluable institution, offering music lessons five days to some 1,200 kids via the Harmony Project (the children got a burst of national attention around the 2016 Super Bowl, collaborating with LA Philharmonic’s Gustavo Dudamel and performing with Cold Play on the half-time show). In April, she’s expanding next door with the California Jazz and Blues Museum, a project that will further entrench music in the historic African-American district. Clearly, Morrison has a great deal more to contribute on and off the bandstand. “I just try to find things that make me feel good,” she says, revealing both the secret behind her perseverance and her joyful musical partnership with Houston Person.

—Andrew Gilbert

Andrew Gilbert covers jazz for the San Francisco Chronicle and Bay Area News Group.





Produced by Houston Person and Barbara Morrison
Executive Producer: Joe Fields
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Engineer: Nolan Shaheed
Photography by Bob Barry, Jazzography
Design: Keiji Obata and Peter Muller, Littlefield & Company

BARBARA MORRISON

I Wanna Be Loved

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