

KEVIN MAHOGANY

When Kevin Mahogany cut his first records in the early and mid-'90s, he was generally regarded as a welcome anomaly: a young male jazz vocalist in a field where most of his colleagues were either women, or men over 60. With a voice reminiscent of the late Joe Williams, Mahogany has since established himself as a leader and an innovator in vocal jazz—for either gender and for any generation.

Born in 1958 in Kansas City, Missouri, Mahogany grew up with the sound of Memphis and Motown as well as the ever-evolving rock and roll in the turbulent '60s. He studied clarinet, piano and became an accomplished baritone saxophonist, performing with Eddie Baker's New Breed Orchestra while still in high school. His interest in singing began as a child, and continued to develop. His first organized singing was in church during his senior year in high school. At the same time, Kevin was very attracted to singers such as Lambert, Hendricks and Ross, and Eddie Jefferson. He attended Baker University in Kansas, where the industrious Mahogany founded a jazz choir. He entered the school in 1976 and graduated with a BFA in Music, English and Drama in 1981.

After college, Mahogany joined a '60s R&B horn band, then went on to create a group called The Apollos, playing mostly R&B and Motown. After that, he formed Mahogany, an outfit that specialized in R&B, Motown, soul and contemporary jazz.

Kevin recorded four well-received albums on Enja, the independent German label, before landing at Warner Brothers in 1995. His self-titled Warner debut in 1996 garnered critical acclaim from *Newsweek* which described him as "the standout jazz vocalist of his generation." Esteemed writer Whitney Balliet declared in *The New Yorker*, "there is little Mahogany cannot do," while the *Los Angeles Times* called him "one of the first truly gifted male vocalists to emerge in years." The album also earned excellent reviews including four stars from USA Today. That same year, Mahogany appeared in the Robert Altman film *Kansas City*, where he portrayed a character inspired by Big Joe Turner.

The auspicious Warner debut sparked high demand for the Mahogany touch on projects other than his own. He appeared on the 1997 Malpas release *Eastwood After Hours*, a Clint Eastwood ensemble project performed and recorded live at Carnegie Hall. That same year, he made a guest appearance on *Monk On Monk*, T.S. Monk's tribute to his father.

After three more successful albums on Warner (*Another Time, Another Place* in 1997, *My Romance* in 1998 and *Portrait of Kevin Mahogany* in 2000), Mahogany moves to the Telarc label in the summer of 2002 for the release of *Pride & Joy*, a jazzy set of extraordinarily distinctive takes on Motown classics.