

NEWS RELEASE

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PIANIST/COMPOSER/VOCALIST DEANNA WITKOWSKI RELEASES “LENGTH OF DAYS,” THIRD ALBUM AS LEADER, THROUGH ARTISTSHARE, NOVEMBER 15

* Featuring Donny McCaslin (soprano / tenor sax); Dave Ambrosio (bass); and Vince Cherico (drums) *

“Witkowski is not far from jazz stardom with her keyboard techniques, her imaginative composing and arranging, and her wordless vocalizing. Remember her name.”

— Harvey Siders, JazzTimes

“Deanna plays as if she were writing a letter to someone who does not exist. Her piano announces all the autumns yet to come.”

— Guinga, renowned Brazilian guitarist/composer/vocalist

Among today’s serious listeners of jazz there is much agreement on the outstanding artistry of pianist/composer/vocalist **Deanna Witkowski**. Since the appearance of her second album as a leader, *Wide Open Window* (2003), she has firmly established herself worthy of close attention, forging a body of work that celebrates both the adventure of creative collaborations (including recent touring work with Lizz Wright) and a clear purpose of vision. A brilliant pianist with a penchant for strong, engaging arrangements that are frequently colored by her vocals, Witkowski continues to grow in confidence and vitality, reaching new heights with every project she undertakes.

Length of Days stands as further proof of Witkowski’s consummate jazz artistry and widening abilities as a leader with a sure hand. Released through the growingly popular ArtistShare label, the album features the pianist with her quartet, which includes Grammy nominated saxophonist Donny McCaslin (often spotlighted in the award winning Maria Schneider Orchestra) and the stalwart rhythm section of Vince Cherico and Dave Ambrosio, performing four Witkowski originals and five intriguing covers that bridge post-bop instrumentalism, Americana songcraft and Latin rhythms.

PLEASE INCLUDE THIS INFO IN ALL REVIEWS AND FEATURES: this CD is available only online at www.deannajazz.com — not in any retail stores or other online outlets.

In many ways, the centerpiece of *Length of Days* is the title cut, which was written during a family visit in upstate New York. While working on a big band arrangement, Witkowski pulled a harmonic fragment from the piece; meditated on the New Testament image of St. Paul’s blinding conversion; and the composition was born. Supported by McCaslin’s searching soprano sax, Witkowski’s piano and vocals fashion a prayer of hope amidst the myriad uncertainties in life, and the song swirls amid a sea of complex emotions, buoyed by Ambrosio and Cherico’s wholly empathic playing.

Indeed, a spiritual element resounds in a good deal of Witkowski’s music, similar to the heart swells found in Pat Metheny’s compositions. Hearing Witkowski’s vocals intertwine with the soprano sax on her “Prayer for Linda,” “Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo” (a largely unknown gem from the rich history of MGM musicals) and “Feed the Birds” (from *Mary Poppins*—a song that asks people to listen to those most likely to go unnoticed) will recall for many the six-string maestro’s similar desire to captivate and move listeners.

Like most lovers of American song, Witkowski stays close to Cole Porter, and on her new album she gives "In the Still of the Night" a bravura ride, with the melody joyously re-directed after a grand introduction and rhythm section push that emphasizes the fun in the arrangement. While Witkowski generously showcases her bandmates throughout *Length of Days*, her dynamic talents as a pianist are also readily heard: on the album's opener, "Beautiful Hands," which was spurred by a compliment from ArtistShare labelmate Billy Childs, she toys with tempo and throws down *montuno* block chords (undoubtedly copped from her lessons with Chucho Valdés and Hilarrio Durán); and on "Straight, No Chaser" and "I'm Beginning to See the Light" she flashes her chops without being too showy but with enough to figure in the balance—truly Witkowski's style in a nutshell. Another original, "Song for Sarah," proceeds in a stately, measured manner. The melody is first enunciated on bass, before being taken over by soprano sax and piano, the latter shimmering in a gorgeous improvisation worthy of the best pianists out there today.

Look for the resplendent *Length of Days* to be Deanna Witkowski's breakthrough.

Much of the creative process involved in writing, arranging and recording *Length of Days* is chronicled on her ArtistShare website: www.deannajazz.com.

BIOGRAPHY

Deanna Witkowski was born in New Hampshire but grew up in Western Pennsylvania and in upstate New York. Although she studied classical piano and flute since the age of nine, and earned a Bachelor's degree in piano performance, she began focusing on jazz during college, after taking saxophone lessons with a professor who steered her towards a jazz piano teacher. Witkowski has also delved into African, Latin and Brazilian music over the years, traveling extensively to work with other musicians. She arrived in New York in the late 1990s after several seasons of gigging in Chicago and the release of her first album, *Having to Ask*, and in 2002 she won the Great American Jazz Piano Competition in Jacksonville, Florida.

After the release of *Wide Open Window*, Witkowski was profiled on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition* and appeared on a segment of *Piano Jazz* with host Marian McPartland, who remarked: "Between her two records Deanna became a very good pianist; she has a strong sound with interesting and complex harmonies. I think she's destined for a long career because of her nature and drive to improve her playing, which shows she's somebody who wants to be heard."

Witkowski's skill as a composer of sacred music in a jazz idiom has recently led to an invitation as a featured presenter in January 2006 at the Calvin College Worship Symposium, one of the largest arts-in-worship conferences in the country. Her ArtistShare site documents much of her sacred music work with live concert and workshop recordings, in addition to fully notated scores.

In 2004 Witkowski went on tour with highly regarded singer Lizz Wright before returning to New York to start recording *Length of Days*. A late summer appearance at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Dizzy's Club Coca-Cola came as the album was being mastered, and tours through the Midwest and the West Coast have been scheduled for early 2006.

www.deannajazz.com

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