Dallas-based singer/writer Laura Ainsworth has a secret identity. By day, she provides witty one-liners and parody songs to top radio shows worldwide. It’s earned her a behind-the-scenes reputation as one of the most talented funny women in the radio industry.

But by night, she glides into the spotlight in her trademark elbow-length gloves and sequined gowns and with her beguiling, nearly-three-octave voice, breathes fresh new life into the Great American Songbook. Her voice is a pure, sexy, pitch-perfect instrument that can hold, float and caress notes in a way uniquely her own, but with echoes of Ella Fitzgerald, Keely Smith, Rosemary Clooney, Doris Day, Tony Bennett and Mel Torme. It’s not surprising that elegant, supper club jazz is in her DNA, since she grew up watching her dad, renowned big band sax man/clarinetist/arranger Billy Ainsworth, accompany many of those very same musical icons.

Laura creates live shows that usher the audience into her own enchanting world, a cocktail mix combining the retro look of classic club shows of the ‘30s and ‘40s with a sophisticated modern musical sheen and just a twist of flirtatiously naughty humor. It’s an intoxicating blend that has attracted some of the top jazz players in Texas to her side, including longtime partner Brian Piper, one of the most sought-after pianists/producers in the Southwest. Piper has accompanied countless legends, including Mabel Mercer and Cab Calloway, and he was recently honored as a Newport Beach Party spotlight new artist and “2011 Dallas Jazz Musician of the Year.”

Now, the magic they create on stage has finally been captured in the studio with Laura Ainsworth’s critically-hailed debut CD, Keep It To Yourself. Produced and arranged by Piper and featuring his ace modern jazz trio (John Adams, Mike Drake) as the core band, the album ranges from contemporary tunes, like the hilarious female revenge fantasy title track (now being pushed hard to AC stations), to fresh new takes on standards such as “Love For Sale,” “Midnight Sun” (a tribute to her idol, Ella) and a “La Vie En Rose” that shifts from lush, French ballad to hot, ‘30’s Parisian jazz. Then there are the delightfully obscure gems that only a musical archeologist like Laura would know. They include a swinging ditty about the woes of dating called “That’s The Kind of Guy I Dream Of (You Should See The Kind That I Get),” last heard as a Betty Hutton B-side in 1952. And her modern take on Helen Kane’s innocent 1928 hit “He’s So Unusual” reveals a humorous twist in light of today’s frank sexual mores. No wonder that Keep It To Yourself quickly hit Jazz Week’s Top Radio Airplay chart, while critics hailed it as “sublime,” “magic,” “elegant,” “spectacular” and “a unique gem.” Eric Harabadian of Jazz Inside magazine declared, “You can keep all those pop divas, the only one for me is Laura Ainsworth.” And jazz historian Jim Schmidt of KFSR-FM said hers is “the best voice for singing Irving Berlin that I’ve ever heard, at least in this century.”

Perhaps the standout is Laura’s haunting rendition of the classic, “Skylark.” While the entire CD shuns modern studio wizardry, “Skylark” was truly recorded the one-fashioned way: live in a single take with renowned jazz guitarist, Chris DeRosa. There is no editing, sweetening or Autotuning, no vocal gymnastics to detract from the lyrics. There is just the irresistible blend of a great singer, guitarist and song, all coming together to move the soul. Nick DeRiso of SomethingElseReviews.com called it “devastatingly beautiful, nakedly honest” and “transcendent.” That’s the feeling listeners will rediscover when they hear Laura Ainsworth’s Keep It To Yourself!

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