



JAZZWOMEN!

By Elzy Kolb

Change of heart

While growing up in Seattle, **Roxy Coss** thought jazz was "pretty lame" until she started playing saxophone in middle school and a great band director, drummer Clarence Acox, turned her head around. "He always made sure we heard the originals of the tunes we were playing, so we got a sense of how things were supposed to feel," Roxy says. At 15, she came to New York for the first time to play at the Essentially Ellington competition. "Seeing people in New York playing jazz for a living, feeling the energy of the city, that was so cool. After I got home, I was sitting in math class thinking, I don't need this, I'm going to be a jazz musician," she recalls with a laugh. Roxy moved to the Apple four years ago; besides fronting her own band and releasing a self-titled CD last year, she has been working with the J.C. Hopkins Quintet, the Diva Jazz Orchestra, and trumpeter Carol Morgan, plus playing in a funk band and accompanying a singer/songwriter. "I'm pushing my own limits, I want to see what I can do." And she stays in touch with Clarence Acox and often plays with other Acox alumni living in New York. "He was a great instructor," Roxy says. "He keeps connected with us and follows what we're doing." Roxy and her band play *Somethin'* (formerly Miles Café) on Oct. 6.



Roxy Coss, *Somethin'*

Band together

Although **Nicole Metzger** has studied piano and guitar, she'd rather stick to vocals and leave the playing to others. "It would be boring to sing and play alone," she says. "The fun in making music starts with two musicians." Growing up in Germany, Nicole loved to sing along with the radio, pretending her comb was a microphone. "I didn't know English, but I tried to imitate the English singers. I knew I wanted to be a singer by age 4. My parents were totally horrified by my plan to become a professional singer. I was ready to fight against any resistance and just go for it." Nicole studied voice at school, appeared in musical theater productions and by her early teens was singing with a gospel band. A couple of years later, she started gigging with a jazz group: "This band became my real family. I realized that making music was the best way to express myself, to give voice to feelings. And that is still true today." Nicole will be in the Big Apple this month to celebrate the release of

That's What I Want to Do, which comes by its title naturally. "Jazz is not only music for me, it is a lifestyle. I need this spontaneous and creative way to communicate, through improvising. Everyone in the band has the same importance with his or her spontaneous ideas, feelings and messages. If you change one musician, you will get different music. That's jazz, that's how I want to live. That's what I want to do." Nicole and the New York Connection play *Parlor Jazz* in Brooklyn on Oct. 22, and at Saint Peter's Church on Oct. 24.



Nicole Metzger, *Parlor Jazz and Saint Peter's Church*



Antoinette Montague, *Lenox Lounge*

Three or four shades of blue

For **Antoinette Montague**, singing "is not just about the melody, not just about the lyrics. It's about getting them into my soul and spirit." She tries to make sure every set is different: "I want to keep it interesting for myself, and I want to keep the musicians awake and interested," she says. Besides, "There's always someone there who has shown up for multiple gigs, I want to make sure there are some nice musical jewels in the jewelry box they haven't seen or heard before." Recently Antoinette has been working on a medley of Stevie Wonder's "Livin' for the City" and "My Country 'Tis of Thee." Her goal is to "put in context some fun songs that are relevant, without being a real drag. We have enough people yelling at us and preaching at us all the time. But there is so much happening in the world, so much to say, and people are connecting to it." Antoinette is also keeping her eye on a long-term ambition: "Why mealy-mouth my dream? I'm hoping to get to Carnegie Hall and play one damn blues there," she says. "The blues is where I shine most, I just lose myself. When I sing the blues it's a richer picture for all the things I've experienced: the good, the bad and the ugly." Hear it for yourself when Antoinette appears at the Lenox Lounge on Oct. 28-29.