

# KAT EDMONSON

College of Charleston Cistern Yard

May 29 at 9:00pm

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## ARTIST



KAT EDMONSON was determined to be a singer after her mother introduced her to the “Great American Songbook” of pop standards. Living in Austin, she decided to audition for the second season of *American Idol* as a means of jumpstarting her career. Although she didn’t make the finals, she did get a taste for a different music scene, and after returning to Austin, moved steadily forward by

singing all over town seven nights a week—sometimes twice a day—becoming a regular at the renowned Elephant Room, and building a devoted local following.

She recorded *Take To The Sky* in Austin, then sent it to recording engineer and producer Al Schmitt in Los Angeles for mixing, hoping to get something beyond a local-sounding production. Sure enough, the resulting release, which was championed by Austin’s NPR affiliate KUT, reached the Top 20 on the *Billboard* jazz charts.

That 2009 debut elicited praise for the Houston native from major music media like *The New York Times*, which found her “fresh as a spring bouquet,” and NPR’s *All Things Considered*, which hailed her “timeless sound.” It also gained her the attention of fellow Texans Willie Nelson and Lyle Lovett, with whom she shared the stage. In fact, Lovett even enlisted her for a duet on the Christmas classic “Baby, It’s Cold Outside,” which they performed together on tour and on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno.

But *Take To The Sky* also brought Edmonson a new and valued friend in Al Schmitt. “Al and I became very close and stayed in touch, and he wanted to record my next album with me—not just mix it,” she recalls. “So he invited me to be the ‘demonstrating recording artist’ for the annual gathering of METAlliance [the Music & Engineering Technology Alliance]—the producers and engineers group including Al and Phil Ramone and George Massenburg and Ed Cherney and Elliot Scheiner and Chuck Ainlay. It’s a rare honor: People come in from all over the world to see the recording of an album from start to finish, and they were all there to watch me and Al record.”

Most of the recording of *Way Down Low* took two days at Avatar. “Danton Boller, my bass player, had worked with me for several months doing pre-production for the album, to enable us to record it in its entirety over the brief two days we would have in the studio recording for the METAlliance. So we just walked in and played live for two days with no overdubs. But we still needed to mix it and manufacture it, and I wanted strings and horns, so I went to Kickstarter to get the funding.”

Funding accomplished and production completed, *Way Down Low* displays a mature writing style grounded in Edmonson’s early love of American popular song. “I write music that I want to hear, that evokes the popular music of past eras,” she says. “I toy around with the term ‘vintage pop,’ because the term ‘popular music’ is so limited. But my music is never about one era.”

Indeed, Edmonson thinks of songs as “scenes of movies,” she notes. “That’s because I became familiar with ‘the Great American Songbook’ through films before hearing them on records,” she says. “In fact, when I was a little girl, I thought you might go into a supper club, like in an old Fred Astaire movie, recognize the person singing on stage, and then something might happen that would compel you to walk on stage and sing a song! That’s how I began writing songs—carrying out my romantic fantasies from old movies—and whenever I experience an emotion, it seems to cue the song.”

She already has enough songs on hand for two or three more albums. “I’m narrowing down the list for the next album, but I think there are still some gems out there that haven’t been unearthed—original or not,” she says, promising, “I won’t put anything in an album that doesn’t belong there, or feels less than I can do.”

*This performance is made possible in part through funds from the Spoleto Festival USA Endowment, generously supported by BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, Wells Fargo, and Bank of America.*