

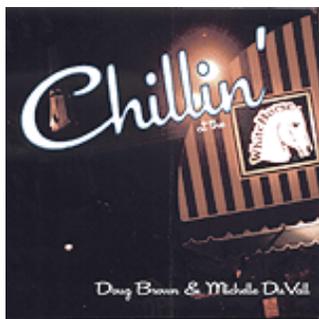
DOUG BROWN & MICHELLE DuVALL

Standards

(2003 Farmer Brown)

Style: Jazz

Titles: *I Can't Give You Anything But Love* (1:54) *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square* (3:44) *A Ghost Of A Chance* (2:28) *Orange Colored Sky* (2:20) *I've Got A Crush On You* (3:40) *Night And Day* (2:42) *Nature Boy* (4:31) *Cheek To Cheek* (3:00) *Skylark* (3:38) *'Deed I Do* (1:54) *It's Delovely* (2:59) *Stompin' At The Savoy* (2:00) *You Go To My Head* (5:46)



Chillin' At The White Horse

(2003 Farmer Brown)

Style: Jazz

Titles: *Chillin' At The White Horse* (4:09) *Frank's Got It Looking Good* (3:44) *The Jessica Jive* (2:00) *Mr. Smooth* (3:50) *Be Little* (4:33) *Surely Shirley* (3:37) *Basket Case* (3:21) *Sam's Got A Brand New Wardrobe* (3:29) *She's New Around Here* (4:06) *I Like Your Style* (4:11)

Musicianship: □ □	★★★ 1/2
Composition: □ □	★★★ 1/2
Lyrics/Interpretation: □	★★★★★
Production: □ □	★★★ 1/2
Packaging: □ □	★★★ 1/2

Total: 18/20

This pair of CDs, both released in 2003, showcases what both of these Madison musicians do best. DuVall is an accomplished vocal stylist, adept at interpreting standard jazz and pop classics but also able to apply her own indelible mark. Brown, who spent nearly eight years with Harmonious Wail, recorded many albums with Ken Lonnquist, and whose discography resembles a lengthy grocery list, has a knack for making a simple electric guitar accompaniment sound like a quiet orchestra. He also composes, produces, sings, and plays piano, violin and banjo.

Standards is exactly what the title implies; time-tested gems that Brown and DuVall have polished to a new sheen. That these two have a love for these songs is abundantly apparent. DuVall's warm voice glides and flutters over the melodies with perfect pitch; you can hear her smiling as she sings. Brown's mellow and pristine guitar is soothing and gentle, and you can hear his fingertips slide over the strings as he strums on "A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square."

Although there is an extensive list of supporting musicians, only two of the songs, "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" and "Orange Colored Sky" get the big-band treatment. The rest are delivered in effectively sparse arrangements that bring home the timeless quality of the compositions. Brown excels on guitar on "I've Got A Crush On You" and puts down a classy solo on "Deed I Do." DuVall really glows on "Nature Boy," nailing every nuance in her phrasing.

Evidently, the album was recorded in two days, in two different studios: Brown's own Farmer Brown studio and Audio For The Arts. The former's material sounds very good and the latter's is strikingly clear.

One would expect *Chillin' at The White Horse* to be a live recording but it's actually a much more cleverly conceived project. The pair have spent a considerable amount of time in the renowned restaurant behind the Civic Center and these are songs written about some of the people they've come to know while performing there. All the songs are penned by Brown and are in a similar vein to those on *Standards*; classic-sounding jazz, pop and swing that's a bit overly charming at times. "Frank's Got It Looking Good" is a standout here, a vocal duet with some great saxophone by the incomparable Les Thimmig. The song is a paean to the janitorial skills of the White Horse custodian. Also notable is "The Jessica Jive" for the multi-tracking of DuVall's vocals; a cool sounding effect that is always pleasing. Brown breaks out the banjo and Thimmig the clarinet on "Basket Case," an ode to the White Horse owner's fondness for hot-air balloon flying.

These recordings are similarly packaged, which enhances their compatibility as a set. The layout, photos and notes are exceptional. Both discs were mastered by Tom Blain at Ultimate Audio and are a joy to listen to.

You can catch this classy duo around town as they gig together quite often. Check www.dougbrownmusic.com for a current schedule.