

JOHN PIZZARELLI CELEBRATES THE MUSIC OF DUKE ELLINGTON ON NEW TELARC RELEASE

Rockin' In Rhythm – A Tribute to Duke Ellington
features special guests Bucky Pizzarelli, Kurt Elling and Jessica Molaskey
with arrangements by Don Sebesky

Singer/guitarist John Pizzarelli, a master in the art of reinventing jazz classics, celebrates the music of Duke Ellington, undeniably one of the most prominent musical icons of the 20th century. Set for release on February 23, 2010, *Rockin' In Rhythm – A Tribute to Duke Ellington* (TEL-31921-02) is Pizzarelli's first ever Ellington recording and his ninth release with Telarc International, a Division of Concord Music Group.

Pizzarelli was still a very young musician when Ellington died in May 1974, but thanks to his father – veteran guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli – he would eventually learn much about jazz's most important composer.

“Duke's music was an integral part of any set my father played,” says Pizzarelli. “I heard a tremendous amount of his music listening to my Dad and then through performing with him. There are some many beautiful melodies and so many discoveries to be made on any given night.”

Like Ellington, Pizzarelli crafts his performances to spotlight the talents of his band members. In addition to a solo track (“Just Squeeze Me”), four songs on *Rockin' In Rhythm* showcase his quartet – pianist Larry Fuller, bassist/brother Martin Pizzarelli and drummer Tony Tedesco – and seven tracks include the Swing Seven horns with arrangements by Don Sebesky.

Pizzarelli and the Swing Seven open the set with the Ellington classic “In A Mellow Tone,” followed by an inspired medley of “East St. Louis Toodle-Oo” and “Don't Get Around Much Anymore.”

An elegant version of “Satin Doll” includes a guitar solo by Pizzarelli's father, Bucky. “On one of Dad's first LPs there was a version of ‘Satin Doll’ I always loved,” Pizzarelli says. “He always plays the song like it's the first time for him, and I'm so glad he played the solo here.”

“C Jam Blues” features violinist Aaron Weinstein and saxophonist Harry Allen. “I couldn't make a record of ‘C Jam’ and not include these two fine soloists,” says Pizzarelli. “I've known Harry since he came to New York City from Woonsocket, Rhode Island over 20 years ago and Aaron since he came here from Chicago about three years ago. They are both cut from the same cloth and eager to make music always.”

Further in, Pizzarelli's solo performance on “Just Squeeze Me” is a tip of the hat to Bucky, George Van Eps (the father of the seven string guitar) and guitar legend Joe Pass.

Pizzarelli has always been a fan of Gerald Wilson's arrangement of “Perdido,” and on this latest reading he shares the spotlight with his wife, the acclaimed Broadway star and recording artist Jessica Molaskey, and vocalist Kurt Elling. “I met Kurt during a gig we shared at the Hollywood Bowl three years ago,” Pizzarelli says. “Although we look at similar songs in different ways, we seemed to hit it off and become friends and really learn from each other. Our mutual love for Lambert, Hendricks and Ross inspired me to get Jessica to write a lyric to that ‘Perdido’ recording from Ellington's *Piano in the Background* album. It also gave me the opportunity to get Kurt on the CD. What a thrill!”

After a recent chat with Tony Bennett at a party, Pizzarelli recalled the legendary singer's

moving performance of Ellington's "Love Scene" at a 1986 Radio City Music Hall concert, and decided to record his own interpretation. Bennett included "Love Scene" on his 1965 recording *If I Ruled the World: Songs for the Jet Set*. "If you see Tony live, he always mentions Duke, much like my father does," says Pizzarelli. "This tune is a rare one that I'm glad I remembered to include."

Rockin' In Rhythm is the follow up to Pizzarelli's critically-acclaimed 2008 release, *With A Song In My Heart – John Pizzarelli Sings the Music of Richard Rodgers*, which featured Sebesky's GRAMMY® nominated arrangement of "Johnny One Note."

In 2009, Pizzarelli won the Montreal Jazz Festival's prestigious Ella Fitzgerald Award, conferred in recognition of the versatility, improvisational originality and quality of repertoire of a jazz singer renowned on the international scene.

Rockin' In Rhythm combines the enduring work of Duke Ellington with John Pizzarelli's incredible ability to reinterpret the Great American Songbook.

Pizzarelli says, "Don Sebesky surprised us all at the session when, after the 'keeper' take of 'C Jam,' he said that we should 'thank Pizzarelli for getting us all together to play Duke Ellington.' Well, I am grateful that when I chose to salute such an American icon as Duke Ellington, I had such tremendous friends and associates to help realize my dream."

John Pizzarelli's *Rockin' In Rhythm – A Tribute to Duke Ellington* (TEL-31921-02) is due at retail on February 23, 2010.

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