

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Singer Amy Cervini Flies the Flag for Her “Jazz Country” with Guitarist Jesse Lewis & Bassist Matt Aronoff

Cervini’s fourth album – to be released in February 2014 by Anzic Records – presents her trio’s atmospheric takes on jazz, country, folk and pop favorites, with guest spots by Anat Cohen, Nellie McKay and Marty Ehrlich, among others

“Delightful and entertaining... Cervini is a very special singer.”

— New York City Jazz Record

Free-spirited, genre-defying singer **Amy Cervini** – praised as “an honest, self-assured and honey-dripping presence” by *All Music Guide* – continues to broaden the idea of what a jazz singer can be with her fourth album, *Jazz Country*. To be released **Feb. 18, 2014**, by Anzic Records, *Jazz Country* is a beautiful collection of “North Americana” that finds the Toronto-bred, New York-based singer in league with her eponymous Jazz Country trio mates, guitarist **Jesse Lewis** and bassist **Matt Aronoff**, plus such guests as clarinet superstar **Anat Cohen**, one-of-a-kind singer-songwriter **Nellie McKay** and avant-jazz saxophonist **Marty Ehrlich**, among others. Cervini and company perform jazz and country songs, as well as folk and pop tunes, with a sense of storytelling, melody and atmosphere to the fore. Virtuoso drummer **Matt Wilson** put down his sticks to take the producer’s chair for the album. *Jazz Country* features songs by the likes of Hank Williams and Neil Young, Johnny Cash and Carrie Underwood; there are kindred-spirit originals, inspired novelties and a soundtrack classic (“Calling You” from *Baghdad Café*), along with irresistible versions of such evergreens as “Blue Moon” and “Smile.” *Time Out New York* has praised Cervini’s work for “tearing down boundaries between old and new jazz styles, rock, pop, country and more – a reminder of Duke Ellington’s old axiom that there’s just two kinds of music, good and bad.”

With *Jazz Country*, Cervini explores multiple aspects of the title. Most obviously, jazz meets country on the album or, rather, jazz-schooled musicians explore country, folk and pop music. More deeply, there’s the idea of Cervini’s own jazz country, in New York City. She explains: “At heart, **the title Jazz Country reflects a community of musicians** – kindred spirits for me, personally and artistically. The band’s initial aim of blending jazz and country music – out of a love for each – has become something more: a celebration of a circle of musical friends, all the diverse personalities and talents.” About her Jazz Country trio, Cervini says: “This is a democratic band, one where everyone brings their own ideas. Jesse is so versatile, adventurous and creative, with his own sound and style. Matt is such a sensitive bassist. He really watches me, flowing with the voice. The band steeped in this music over three years of gigs at places like the 55 Bar and Cornelia Street Café, so we really developed our sound. Jazz is often about filling space, but we wanted to leave space in the music. There aren’t any drums or cymbals in the mix, and **we weren’t afraid to let the voice and lyrics resonate in the air, so there’s room to really feel the stories in the songs.**”

As for the album’s special guests, Cervini says: “**Anat Cohen** is the premier voice on her instrument, and she has guested with Jazz Country a lot. Whenever we do a song like ‘Frim Fram Sauce’ without her, I miss her presence – it’s so energizing. I have worked with **Marty Ehrlich** for years in various capacities, and I have such respect for him. He has this strong, soulful voice as an instrumentalist and brought a real blues feel to ‘I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry.’ I’ve been a big fan of **Nellie McKay** for a long time, and I recorded her song ‘I Wanna Get Married’ on my album *Lovefool*. She’s such a unique performer and having her sing and play ukulele on ‘Wallflower Lonely, Cornflower Blue’ was a real treat. I got to know keyboardist-accordionist **Gary Versace** through his work in Matt Wilson’s Arts & Crafts band. He’s astoundingly inventive and such a thoughtful accompanist. Trumpeter **Nadje Noordhuis** is another thoughtful musician,

with a beautiful tone and melodic sense. Besides being a wonderful pianist, arranger and producer, **Oded Lev-Ari** is my best friend, husband and father of our two kids. 'Go Gently to the Water' is the first duet we've recorded together, oddly enough. **Matt Wilson** and I work together a lot – we talk practically every day. Full of ideas and positivity, he's a master of allowing musical moments to happen. He enabled Jazz Country to be what it could really be – and he captured it."

Jazz Country ranges from tunes that Cervini fell for her in childhood to recent hits that caught her ear. "**Wallflower Lonely, Cornflower Blue**" is a tune by Dave Frishberg, composer of *Schoolhouse Rock* fame. Cervini covered a Frishberg number on her acclaimed 2012 album, *Digging Me, Digging You: A Tribute to Blossom Dearie*, and here she breaks out her saxophone to go along with McKay's ukulele. "**Song for the Mira**" is a lyrical Canadian folk song that Cervini sang in choir as a kid, as she did the classic "**After the Goldrush**" by fellow Canadian Neil Young. "**Go Gently to the Water**" is a song by renowned jazz vocalist Dominique Eade, one of Cervini's former teachers at the New England Conservatory of Music. The arrangement of "**Blue Moon**" grew out of guitarist Jesse Lewis's spontaneous introduction to the timeless tune, while Cervini co-wrote the charming "**Penguin Dance**" with Nicky Schrire, a South African singer who has performed in Cervini's ongoing duet nights at the 55 Bar in Greenwich Village (where her duet partners have also included Janis Siegel, Peter Eldridge and Fay Victor, among many others). Cervini co-wrote the album's other original, the cinematic fantasy "**Je Danse Avec la Neige**," for a Macy's holiday commercial, with the French title translating as "I Dance With the Snow."

"**Frim Fram Sauce**" was famously recorded by Nat King Cole, but Cervini learned the number from another fellow Canadian, Diana Krall. Although some hear risqué whimsy in the song, Cervini insists that, for her, the song really is about food: "Maybe there's some double-entendre in there, but I don't sing it that way. I'm just a good girl, I guess." One of Cervini's key early influences was Canadian avant-torch singer Holly Cole: "Holly's records were my singalong music in the car as a teenager. She was doing jazzy covers of pop songs before it was the thing to do – Disney tunes, Roberta Flack, Lyle Lovett, Elvis Costello, a whole album of Tom Waits, all of which she made her own. It never occurred to me that she was breaking the rules – it was just cool. Unlike most jazz singers, I learned '**I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry**' not from Tony Bennett's version but from hers."

Cervini first heard "**Calling You**" – the melody-rich theme song from the '80s indie movie *Baghdad Café* – in a college film-studies class. She says: "That song paints such an emotional picture, with the chorus having this cry to it. Jesse sings a wordless vocal on the track – and that came about during a show, completely spontaneously. We never rehearsed it, and he never even told me he was going to do it. He just burst into song, really feeling it. I loved it so much that it became the way we do the song from then on." The inspiration for recording Johnny Cash's "**I Still Miss Someone**" came from another member of Cervini's New York circle, singer Melissa Stylianou. "Melissa's arrangement of this is much jazzier," she says. "I fell for the bittersweet story, so I did it in a simpler, more direct way, using the original harmony." A more contemporary country number on the album is K.T. Oslin's "**Drivin' Cryin' Missin' You**," which Cervini heard Manhattan Transfer vocal star Janis Siegel do. Cervini says: "Janis graciously let me steal it."

The most recent song on the album is the Carrie Underwood smash "**Before He Cheats**" – a picturesque number about a girl getting even preemptively by keying a philandering beau's precious car. "It's a pretty raw but very funny story, and something that nearly everyone can relate to, whether you've gotten even like that or just wish you had," Cervini says. As for the Charlie Chaplin perennial "**Smile**" – one of the most covered songs in history – Cervini avoided hearing anyone's recording of it for years as she pondered someday doing it herself. "I cleared my mind of previous interpretations and concentrated on the lyrics, which are very emotional if you stop to really listen to them," she says. "Whether it's 'Smile' or 'Frim Fram Sauce' or 'Before He Cheats,' whether they're funny or wistful or imagistic, what all these songs on the album have in common is that they paint a picture or tell a story, like a little movie for our minds."

Amy Cervini

The New York Times has described Amy Cervini as “a thoughtful and broad-minded jazz singer,” and *DownBeat* magazine called her Anzic album *Digging Me, Digging You: A Tribute to Blossom Dearie* “a gem.” Cervini’s two previous solo albums – *Love Fool* (2009, Orange Grove) and *Famous Blue* (2007, Orange Grove) – saw the vocalist range interpretively from Cole Porter, Billie Holiday and Leonard Cohen to the Cardigans, Feist and Depeche Mode. Live, she has performed in clubs and concert halls from Toronto to Tel Aviv and in prime New York venues from the 55 Bar, Cornelia Street Cafe, Joe’s Pub and the Knitting Factory to the Jazz Standard, Birdland, the Blue Note and Carnegie Hall. The *Ottawa Citizen* declared that “the ex-pat Canadian sings terrific, gimmick-free jazz [with a] poise, intelligence and an unforced honesty that makes every song ring like it was her own.”

Amy Cervini: Jazz Country

1. “Blue Moon” (R. Rodgers, L. Hart)
2. “Wallflower Lonely, Cornflower Blue” (Dave Frishberg)
3. “Song for the Mira” (Allister MacGillivray)
4. “Frim Fram Sauce” (R. Evans, J. Ricardel)
5. “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry” (Hank Williams)
6. “Calling You” (Robert Telson)
7. “Go Gently to the Water” (Dominique Eade)
8. “Penguin Dance” (Amy Cervini, Nicky Schrire)
9. “Smile” (C. Chaplin, J. Turner, G. Parsons)
10. “Je Danse Avec la Neige” (Amy Cervini, Aaron Kotler)
11. “After the Gold Rush” (Neil Young)
12. “I Still Miss Someone” (Johnny Cash)
13. “Before He Cheats” (C. Tompkins, Josh Kear)
14. “Drivin’ Cryin’ Missin’ You (K.T. Oslin, M. Smotherman)

Amy Cervini, vocals & saxophone (track 2)
Jesse Lewis, guitar & voice (6); Matt Aronoff, double-bass

Anat Cohen, clarinet (4, 10); Mary Ehrlich, saxophone (5)
Oded Lev-Ari, piano (7, 8); Nellie McKay, voice & ukelele (2)
Nadje Noordhuis, trumpet (12); Gary Versace, accordion (8)

Produced by Matt Wilson
Co-produced by Amy Cervini & Oded Lev-Ari
Recorded, edited and mixed by Brian Montgomery at Sear Studios, New York

Press photos and sound samples available at: www.amycervini.com

Video available at: www.youtube.com/amycervini

**For interview requests, please contact:
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