

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ...

"Drummer John Armato is an unusual cat for a drummer. He favors the warm vibe of ballads to the pounding of a jam session ... (He) keeps it light with brief interludes then shows his chops on "Poinciana." A fine effort that reunited friends to express fine music.

Oscar Groomes, O's Place Jazz Magazine

"A perfect companion for a romantic dinner and dance afterwards!"

Keys and Chords, Dutch online music magazine

"Drummer John Armato gives an intimate and personal album ... on this intriguing musical journey. A nice evening by the fireside with some drums, and bring a bottle of wine."

JazzWeekly

"The most emblematic Kansas City jazz album of 2021 is the work of a drummer who currently lives in Sacramento. John Armato oversees a bevy of prominent Kansas City musicians on his ambitious concept album. The inclusion of so many scene stalwarts on the stylistically conservative, musically impeccable and deliberately hushed *The Drummer Loves Ballads* makes the album an invaluable document of the mainstream sound that continues to dominate Kansas City's jazz clubs."

Bill Brownlee, plasticsax.com

Paul Keller

Bassist, band leader, composer, arranger, touring and recording artist (Diana Krall, Russel Malone, Rebecca Kilgore, Paul Keller Orchestra)

Let it be known that I think your new CD is fantastic! It's a thing of beauty! Really. I think you scored big time with this fun and entertaining recording. It's so nice to hear your relaxed and mature musical subtleties and swinging percussive sensibilities. They enhance every performance on this CD! You are terrific!

Pete Malinverni

Pianist, associate professor and chair of jazz studies, Purchase College SUNY

One of the gems on this beautiful album is "The Shadows of Paris," whose evocative arrangement serves as the perfect setting for the jewel that is Lucy Wijnands. Her world-wise delivery belies her youth, as it always does. I will look forward to following her career, certain to be long, and certain to touch many in the heart.

Anne Phillips

Singer and recording artist ("Born to be Blue"), composer, conductor, producer, educator, creator of the Jazz Nativity and Children's Jazz Choir

What a sweet, sweet, beautiful album. It's just what we need to hear today!

Allen Goodman

Retired NBC staff drummer, touring and recording artist (Johnny Mathis, Peggy Lee, Liza Minnelli)

What a joy to hear your treatment of these beautiful tunes. It's apparent that you love them. From your very tasty brushwork (something I don't hear enough of these days) to the swinging band including some of my favorite jazz legends it's a wonderful CD that I look forward to hearing again and again. And I love your drum solo on the intro.



Jake Reed
LA session drummer

John Armato's album "The Drummer Loves Ballads" is a breath of fresh air in a world where drummer-led albums have the tendency to be wall-to-wall, flashy displays of technique and mathematical acrobatics. It's so nice to listen to John lead from the drums in an understated, beautifully swinging fashion.

Staci Griesbach
Vocalist and recording artist

Oh, for the love of brushes! This is a perfect album for a romantic Saturday night and bottle of nice red wine. Stellar concept for an album, and beautifully executed.

Jonathan Levine
Broadway woodwind artist, veteran of multiple touring shows, New York session player (Geoff Muldaur, They Might Be Giants)

This is an EXCELLENT album! I truly dug everything about it –

- *The Gil Evans-inspired horn arrangements on "Dreamsville" are beautiful.*
- *The warm strings that introduce Mancini's "Shadows of Paris" are perfectly scored and set the stage for Lucy Wijnands' beautiful, haunting rendition.*
- *Lynn Zimmer's sweet, fluid clarinet solo on "Memories of You" is fantastic! His traditional, unencumbered, relaxed style belies just how hard he swings. The whole band is totally in the pocket!*
- *Whether it is Doug Talley's tasty tenor sax noodling around Lisa Henry's vocals or Brett Jackson's gorgeous, fat sound on bari sax, John Armato knows how to pick his horn players and uses them to perfect effect!*
- *The concept, the variety, the spoken-word interludes, the playing -- the amount of time, thought and talent that went into it is crystal clear and it is something really special.*

John approaches the drum kit as a painter approaches his palette. Each color is applied judiciously and placed precisely where it needs to be. Always impressive as a featured percussionist, he also fully grasps his role as a sideman, stepping back as needed so that his soloists can shine. Whether in a duo, trio, quartet, big band or studio orchestra, John complements every player – listening, reacting, contributing. As it is with John Armato in life, it's always a conversation – and a good one at that!

Dr. Charles T. Menghini
President Emeritus, VanderCook College of Music

Lucy Wijnand's voice is so effortless and pure. So innocent yet confident. She, on "The Shadows of Paris," along with Lynn Zimmer on "Memories of You," coupled with Armato's interlude commentary, steals the entire recording for me. These alone make the album worth having.

Dave Goodman
Former Disney and SeaWorld Orlando executive producer, consultant to some of the largest entertainment brands in the world, former touring and recording artist, recording studio owner, and music educator

To know John Armato is to know what friendship really means. To hear John play drums on this record is to know what modesty really means. When so many drummers are consumed with complexity and athleticism, John stays focused on the art of the ensemble. He understands when to lead and when to follow, when to provide the most basic rhythmic foundation and when to add his voice to the musical dialogue.

Some say good taste comes with age. Others say experience. What is true about cognac, cabernet sauvignon and leadership can be said about John's approach to this mellow, memorable, musical style. Plus, his interludes are pure genius –the most unique element to any album project I have ever heard and so incredibly heartfelt.

So, pour yourself a glass of your favorite libation. Sit back and enjoy a wonderful collage of musical fellowship, led by a serious jazz aficionado, outstanding drummer and quite possibly the gentlest of gentlemen to ever grace the drummer's throne. I can assure you that it won't be only the drummer loving these ballads!



Wayne Hawkins

Pianist, composer, arranger,
and recording artist

The world needs to hear this album!

Rod Fleeman

Guitarist, touring and recording artist
(Karrin Allyson, Marilyn Maye)

Who knew John Armato loved ballads? But I love that you did, and it brought out the best in you and I think the rest of us. It was so wonderful to be part of such a creative and unique project! There was no ego involved, with an openness that was truly refreshing. It was a communal effort. Thanks, John, for a unique opportunity to work with some of my favorite musicians and friends. I wish we were going back in the studio tomorrow to see what happens next!

Doug Talley

Tenor saxophonist, recording artist,
and music educator

"The Drummer Loves Ballads" is a musical reminder of what's really important; it's like a collection of musical short stories about human relationships, each distinct yet related. I'll bet you can't listen to just one.

Lucy Wijnands

Touring vocalist (Netherlands, Tokyo),
former resident performer at Birdland,
and 2021 winner of the prestigious Ella
Fitzgerald Vocal Competition

Dreamsville is one of my favorite songs, so I was glad to hear that one of Mancini's best was part of the project. Not to mention how Warren floats over the tune with such ease! I am so happy to be a part of Armato's project and hear the talents of so many great musicians like himself. Was also glad to hear the shoutout to our mutual hometown, Kansas City!

Paul Roberts

Composer, arranger, trombonist, former
United States Army Staff Arranger

This is a great collection of songs and a phenomenal snapshot of some of Kansas City's best players. The spoken-word interludes sound like something Sinatra might do to introduce a song.

Peter Millrose

Recording Engineer

It was a thrill to work with the two legendary horn players, Warren Vaché and Houston Person, and the wonderful Anne Phillips. Consummate professionals playing real instruments, what a concept!

Peter Petty

"Da Man wit' da Flop," recording artist
and Sacramento Area Music Award's
"Best Live Performer"

This is a beautiful collection beautifully rendered but you know what really stood out to me? Your spoken-word interludes. And I really wanted to hear more of them. They were a lovely insight into the person of the ballad-loving drummer – an absolutely compellingly personal touch to an absolutely compellingly personal album. And your drumming is so damned compellingly tasteful! It's no wonder you love ballads; you actually feel them! This is great shit ...

Tom "Tommy G" Giovagnoli

Creative Director, songwriter,
Mojo Farmer

There's a difference between playing a song, and finding, feeling, discovering, interpreting, and inhabiting it. I've known John for a long time – and have even worked on some musical projects with him – and believe me, he doesn't play. He finds, feels, discovers, interprets, AND inhabits each of the great tunes on this album – and every other song that comes across his kit.

