

## KATE BAKER (FULL LENGTH BIO)

Kate Baker's debut recording was her late husband Vic Juris's swan song. But that's not the beginning, nor the end, of the story.

In early 2019, the married collaborators — who had performed together for two decades — recorded *Return to Shore*. A captivating set of duo recordings, the album showcased Baker's fluid, radiant voice and Juris's supple guitar mastery in an intimate, unadorned setting. Tragically, soon after these sessions, Juris learned he had neuroendocrine cancer. That New Year's Eve, the disease took his life at 66.

Upon *Return to Shore*'s release on Oct. 7, 2022, the plaudits were extraordinary. Downbeat assigned the album 4 and a half stars; the Arts Fuse deemed it one of the [best jazz albums of 2022](#); Making a Scene called it “one of the most intimate, tender recordings in recent memory.”

The album's backstory drew jazz critics to identify emotional power in the choice of material: Lerner and Loewe's standard “I've Grown Accustomed to His Face,” Joni Mitchell's “Black Crow” and “Both Sides Now,” and — perhaps most poignantly — the Beach Boys' “God Only Knows,” released ahead of *Return to Shore* on what would have been Juris's 68th birthday: Sept. 23.

This is understandable; after all, it was in the press release, and music typically needs a gripping story to cut through a saturated landscape. But if the jaw-droppingly talented Juris was still with us — and by all rights, he should be — *Return to Shore* would still belong on your shelf. Beyond the musicians' soul connection and the cataclysmic event to come, the album succeeds on a simpler merit: a couple of musical masters made it.

While *Return to Shore* marks Baker's debut recording, it by no means marks the inauguration of her musical legacy. Far from it: she's been a mainstay on the performance circuit since she began singing rock music at 20, later moving on to Americana-laced sounds, purveyed in solo and duo settings.

The throughline is Baker's inimitable voice, which resonates with her love of diverse musical inspirations — whether jazz, Brazilian, Latin, or the blues. Be it English or Portuguese, a Cole Porter standard or an Antônio Carlos Jobim composition, Baker effortlessly makes herself right at home.

For two decades, she frequently performed with Juris, but that, too, isn't the long and short of it. Across the years and decades, the list of

luminaries the native New Jerseyan has performed with is a cross-section of the global jazz landscape.

These include: trumpeter Claudio Roditi; pianists Norman Simmons, Helio Alves, and Rachel Z; bassists Harvie S. and Todd Coolman; drummer Duduka Da Fonseca, alto saxophonists Steve Wilson and Richie Cole; tenor saxophonist Houston Person, multi-reedist Dick Oatts; saxophonist and flutist Dave Liebman, and Dave Stryker — a lauded guitarist who went on to produce *Return to Shore*.

Along the way, Baker has performed at venues and festivals both stateside and abroad. In Manhattan, she's performed sold-out sets at Birdland, Blue Note, Mezzrow, and 55 Bar. In the Tri-State Area, Baker has appeared at the Berkshile, Tarrytown, and OSPAC Jazz Festivals, as well as the Jazz Forum in Tarrytown. In Europe, she's taken the stage at the Euro Meet, Carini, and Pergine Spettacolo Jazz Festivals — to name a few.

All the while, Baker has forged a concurrent legacy as a vocal coach — sometimes nicknamed “the voice whisperer.” The litany of [heartfelt testimonials](#) on her website say it all: *American Idol* contestant called her “the epitome of what stellar vocal coaches are made of.”

“I finally feel like I am in great hands. My voice is now growing and developing,” jazz/pop singer Luba expressed.

“Kate Baker is a wizard at determining what is needed to bring your voice up to its optimum level,” glows La Tanya Hall, a jazz singer and backing vocalist for Seal and Steely Dan. “Her techniques are gentle yet highly effective. I have recommended many students to her and value her expertise.”

“Ask any working professional singer in NYC who they go to when they are in dire straits, and hands down, the first person they say is Kate Baker,” GRAMMY nominee Nicole Zuraitis says. “She goes above and beyond for her students and colleagues alike, teaching with a warmth and kindness that accelerates progress. There's no one like her, and I owe her my career for saving my cords when I was in dire straits.”

And fellow jazz vocalist Thana Alexa, who works closely with drumming phenom Antonio janchez, summed it up: “She has a holistic approach that aims at not only correcting vocal issues but helps with life issues that affect the voice — the physical being and the corresponding musical expression that can be changed as a result... I am lucky to have found her.”

A vocal producer in New York and Los Angeles, Baker also teaches privately and is on the faculty of the New School University of Jazz and Contemporary Music. She has conducted master classes at major institutions throughout the United States and Europe, including co-leading many master classes with singing legends Sheila Jordan and Mark Murphy.

She soars as an educator — as her colleagues and students are quick to note.

“Kate Baker is my first call to teach a workshop or class,” declared the now 94-year-old jazz legend Sheila Jordan, whose career dates back to her friendship with Charlie Parker and beyond.

With *Return to Shore* in the rearview, as Baker charts the next segment of her professional voyage, she continues to teach, coach and perform, while mulling over creative moves slightly afield from jazz. Currently, she’s working with a new band that’s more Americana-based, with violinist Sara Caswell, aforementioned keyboardist Rachel Z, guitarist Paul Bollenback, bassist Jay Anderson, and drummer Tim Horner.

Baker is currently in the studio getting ready to launch a new release with the above band. *Return to Shore* marked something of a culmination of a romantic and creative partnership; it was all the sweeter that she took her time to process it in her consciousness. Too many jazz artists churn out as much music as humanly possible; that’s not Baker’s way. As in her parallel careers, every note *matters*.

At present, Baker is touring to celebrate the release of *Return to Shore* in a duo format with Bolenback, as well as the above Americana-styled ensemble. Touring aside, whatever Baker’s next offering will turn out to be, it will bear the marks of one of the most deeply intentional and emotionally fluent artists on the contemporary scene — one who’s arguably just getting started.