

# jennifer lee • vocalist • pianist • guitarist • • composer • lyricist •



It's been seven years since her last release, but multi-faceted artist Jennifer Lee has been busy manifesting the prophesy of track #2 from her new album **Glimpse**. *Farewell to Comfort*, a lively samba that Lee penned in 2017, turned out to be a premonition, foretelling a cascade of monumental changes in her life that began in 2019. These changes include meeting and marrying her husband George Visger; moving from her beloved Oakland home of 21 years to a tiny, rural town in southwestern Idaho; as well as authoring and illustrating her first children's book **Relativity**. (Books number two and three are currently in the works!)

Now settled into her new home (and her expanded professional identity), Lee has at last freed up the bandwidth to release recordings she's had in the can for a while. The resulting album – a glittering collection of nine originals, one standard and one song written by her close friends – is the fourth by the esteemed Bay Area jazz vocalist/guitarist/pianist turned composer/lyricist. Showcasing her songwriting skills across a wide spectrum of musical styles, similarly to her 2018 release. **Glimpse** is sure to catch the attention of vocalists in search of beautifully crafted songs to add to their repertoires.

As on her previous, critically-hailed albums – 2003's *Jaywalkin'*, 2009's *Quiet Joy*, and 2018's *My Shining Hour* (all on the label SBE Records) – Lee draws on two deep pools of talent from San Diego and the Bay Area, with the addition of one East Coast jazz virtuoso, trumpeter Randy Brecker. The line of continuity runs through Peter Sprague, the brilliant San Diego guitarist known for his extensive work with Chick Corea, Charles McPherson, and Hubert Laws. For Lee, the now 24-year collaboration with Sprague has provided, among many other things, an education. "Peter is an extraordinary musician and a deeply soulful player," she says. "Working with him over the years, watching how he'll reharmonize or phrase a line, I've learned so much. It's definitely influenced my writing and arranging."

Lee changed her artist name (the name under which she officially releases her recordings) to "Jennifer Lee and the Ever-Expanding Universe" in 2018 when she realized that, on the streaming platforms, her profile had been interwoven with that of another vocalist named Jennifer Lee. While she continues to perform as Jennifer Lee or as Jennifer Lee and the Ever-Expanding Universe, depending on the gig, the artist's full name is Jennifer Lee Sevison, which is how she publishes (via **Muitapaz Music**, her publishing company established in 2003) and copyrights her songs.

Born in Redwood City, California, and raised in Menlo Park, Lee attended Woodside High School, but in her senior year transferred to Menlo-Atherton High as a pianist to take advantage of the school's respected jazz program. She continued her jazz piano studies at Foothill College, often accompanying vocalists, all the while nursing her secret desire to sing. She didn't take the plunge until an early, unwanted confrontation with mortality radically changed her priorities in the late 1980s, when she dropped out of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst to tend to her ailing father.

"My dad got really sick and I came back from school to take care of him," Lee says. "He died the next year. He was only 51. That really brought things into focus for me. I realized that none of us knows how long we have here on planet earth, so I'd better do what I want to do now."

After her father's passing, she returned to the Foothill College music department, but instead of backing other singers, she took over the microphone herself. Subsequently studying with esteemed Bay Area jazz singer Kitty Margolis, Lee gradually worked up the courage to start performing in public.

"It took me so long to come to singing – to finally admit to myself that this is really what I want to do. Then it took another decade plus for the songwriter in me to emerge. I'm the epitome of the late bloomer," says Lee, who honed her jazz technique on a succession of regular gigs around the Bay Area. She made her first appearance on CD in 2001 on **Quintessential**, an album featuring three tracks each by five Bay Area singers, including Jenna Mammina and Cathi Walkup.

Her 2003 CD *Jaywalkin'* was named "finest debut of the year, big label or small" by Dan McClenaghan of *All About Jazz*. Lee's 2009 release *Quiet Joy* – an exciting mix of originals, standards and Brazilian songs – was a favorite of the late Bud Spangler (drummer / Grammy-nominated producer) who called it "a JOY from start to finish." In reference to Lee's 2018 release, *Jazz, Bossa and Beyond* said, "On *My Shining Hour*, Lee emerges as a composer who has developed a striking repertoire exploring the human condition with humor, compassion, and imagination." And the San Diego Tribune said, "Lee sings and writes with warmth and clarity. She sparkles whether performing her own material or jazz and Brazilian-music classics."

With each album, Lee's music has become more finely wrought and fully formed. Since teaming up with Peter Sprague on her debut release, Spragueland Studios in Encinitas has turned into a creative refuge and laboratory for Jennifer Lee – a renewable chrysalis from which this gifted artist emerges again and again, each time taking flight as a more brilliantly-hued and expansive musician.

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