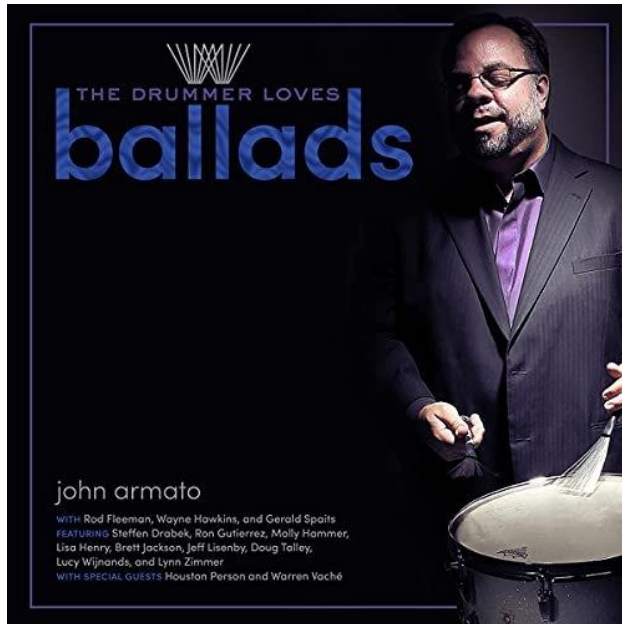


[Plastic Sax](#)

[Album Review: John Armato- The Drummer Loves Ballads](#)

August 15, 2021



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 Drummer Loves Ballads](#).

Armato turns to the contacts he made during the years he spent on Kansas City's jazz scene to realize his imaginative vision. Two storied outsiders- saxophonist Houston Person and cornetist Warren Vaché- also get in on the action on the project released in May.

A survey of a few highlights reflects the album's breadth. Brett Jackson pays tribute to the late baritone saxophonist Kerry Strayer on "Night Lights." Lucy Wijnands, the daughter of the Kansas City mainstay Bram Wijnands, croons the dreamy chanson "The Shadows of Paris."

A duet by vocalists Ron Gutierrez and Molly Hammer is ravishing. Veteran pianist Wayne Hawkins and clarinetist Lynn Zimmer make sentimental contributions. An interpretation of "Lonely Woman" features characteristically stunning work from guitarist Rod Fleeman and bassist Gerald Spaits.

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.