

**E. J. DECKER**

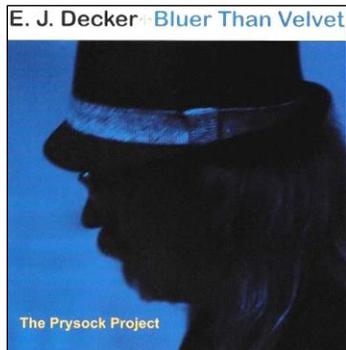
**“BLUER THAN VELVET:  
THE PRYSOCK PROJECT”**

**Candela Records**

– Candela EJ9942

**Personnel:**

- E. J. Decker* = vocals, producer, arranger, design
- Claire Daly* = baritone sax (tracks 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13)
- Elizabeth Frascoia* = trombone (tracks 4, 7, 8, 11)
- Chris Bergson* = guitar (tracks 1-9, 11, 12)
- Les Kurtz* = piano
- Saadi Zain* = bass
- Tom Melito* = drums



- 1 You'd Better Change Your Ways (3:24)**  
(William Greaves/Milt Gabler)
- 2 Autumn In New York (5:09)**  
(Vernon Duke)
- 3 What A Difference A Day Made (3:33)**  
(Maria Mendez Grever/Stanley Adams)
- 4 Blue Velvet (5:10)**  
(Bernie Wayne/Lee Morris)
- 5 Why Can't You Behave? (6:31)**  
(Cole Porter)
- 6 Since I Fell For You (5:38)**  
(Woodrow Buddy Johnson)
- 7 It's Too Late (Baby Too Late) (3:49)**  
(Gayle Candis Brown/Hazel Johnson)
- 8 When You Walked In The Room (5:33)**  
(Clyde Otis/Chris Towns)
- 9 He Loves And She Loves (3:44)**  
(George Gershwin/Ira Gershwin)
- 10 When I Fall In Love (2:40)**  
(Edward Heyman/Victor Young)
- 11 On The Street Where You Live (3:34)**  
(Alan Jay Lerner/Frederick Loewe)
- 12 I Could Write A Book (4:29)**  
(Richard Rodgers/Lorenz Hart)
- 13 (I Don't Stand) A Ghost Of A Chance (5:27)**  
(Victor Young/Bing Crosby/Ned Washington)
- 14 September In The Rain (2:54)**  
(Al Dubin/Harry Warren)

Following up on his 2013 album *A Job of Work: Tales of the Great Recession*, vocalist **E. J. Decker** turns his attention toward one of his key influences, the late Arthur Prysock, on *Bluer Than Velvet: The Prysock Project*.

It was the late Mark Murphy, briefly a teacher of Decker's, who urged him to undertake a Prysock project. "I mentioned Prysock and Mark lit up," Decker says. "He understood that nobody had done a proper tribute, that this was an underrepresented, underserved artist. I realized that Prysock was a major influence on me for a good amount of time, and there was more to the relationship than I'd given myself credit for."

Decker encountered Prysock indirectly through his father, a former big band singer. "My father is the answer to a trivia question no one ever asked, 'Who did Frank Sinatra replace in the Tommy Dorsey band?' It was my dad." After the music career dried up, his father opened a luncheonette. A young E. J. worked there and would turn the dial away from his father's preferred mature fare (WNEW-AM) toward current rock and pop stations.

But one evening while closing up, WNEW played and "this deep voice came up and scared the crap out of me," Decker recalls. "It was Prysock. It was a big, booming man's voice. I always wanted to be older when I was a kid, so this just stopped me dead in my tracks. He had a thing that separated him from Johnny Hartman and Billy Eckstine."

It's this aspect of Prysock's legacy that Decker seeks to highlight on *Bluer Than Velvet*. The program includes Prysock hits, both well-known standards and songs that only he recorded. But it also includes songs Prysock did *not* record: Cole Porter's "Why Can't You Behave," the Gershwins' "He Loves and She Loves," Lerner & Loewe's "On the Street Where You Live." "On these," Decker muses, "I found I was taking the same approach that I heard him take, that in essence he taught me. Though he never sang them himself, they still fit right in."

Prysock (1924-1997) had his first hits with bandleader Buddy Johnson, spiked in popularity in the mid-'70s with a series of iconic TV ads, and had a disco hit with Gamble & Huff's "When Love Is New." He was, as Derrick Lucas observes in his liner notes, "one of the few singers of the 'Golden Age' to perform on both *American Bandstand* and *Soul Train*."

Though he has no formal training, Decker harnesses the talents of his bandmates to create intuitive, unusual arrangements — note the drum-and-voice duo intro on "Why Can't You Behave" and the stark bass-and-voice passages on "When I Fall in Love" and "A Ghost of a Chance." "I've always loved layering a tune, building it from beginning to end," he explains of his approach, which leaves space for the players to inhabit and breathe. "I can explain what's going on in my head and they're good enough friends that they pick it up. I paint word pictures for them, create the framework, and I know where their brain and soul will go."

At its core, *Bluer Than Velvet* is an album of love songs and passage-of-time themes. It's about "love in all its guises, and all of its time frames," Decker explains. "It's a reminiscence album: there's a lot of looking back, there's a lot of time either behind us or to come." The title of "What a Difference a Day Made," for instance, is often rendered as "Makes," but Decker notes the substantive difference: "If it's 'Makes,' you're still in a new romance and coming to terms with how your life has changed. If it's 'Made,' it's past tense: now it's looking back on a day that changed your life. For this album it almost had to be 'Made,' I found after the fact."

Channeling the lush and romantic quality of the Prysock sound while departing from Prysock's original versions in many ways (often into different keys), Decker and company make music with a deeply human heartbeat, echoing Prysock's unique example.

For more information, visit:

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