

Vanessa Collier Biography

Singer/songwriter Vanessa Collier's sixth album *Do It My Own Way* comes out September 13 via Phenix Fire Records. Recorded on analog gear with the musicians largely in one room, *Do It My Own Way* is sonically inspired by the classic Memphis soul sound of Stax and Hi Records, especially that of the Staples Singers.

Second single "Wild As a Rainstorm," which dives deep into soul territory, powerfully gives advice to women and people who feel left out to ignore the naysayers and "Be a tapestry of dreams." The track been added to Spotify's official Retro Soul playlist. The groove and horns would make Willie Mitchell proud, and indeed features legendary Hi Records organist Rev. Charles Hodges. The vocals are powerful, awe-inspiring, and undeniably soulful vocals.

Talking about the album, Collier adds, "It's a warmer and darker sounding a record, recorded intentionally to reflect a throwback to older school soul, R&B, blues, and to the days of great songs and songwriters, tube amps and analog gear."

Do It My Own Way takes listeners back to the heyday of music with Memphis soul-influenced horn arrangements, layers of vocals for color, with poignant and powerful saxophone solos that deliver a quietly powerful undercurrent to each song and the album as a whole. Minor key Americana/noir "Take Me Back" served as the first single. The album kicks off with the funk workout "Elbow Grease." On an album full of incredible grooves, "Shoulda Known Better" stands out while "Just One More" sways to a rumba beat.

The gospel-tinged "Rosetta" pays tribute to one of Collier's heroes, electric guitar pioneer Sister Rosetta Tharpe. Collier sings, "She's carried the torch so I can see a little bit better... There'd be no Elvis or Chuck Berry. Sometimes the women do it best. She tackled all the inequities. And fought with strength and audacity."

Kicking off on resonator guitar before the full band joins in, album closer "Warrior" paints the picture of a powerful woman and is both a universal message about the strength and experience of women and a tribute to Collier's mother. The anthemic, slinky third single and title track artfully commenting on the sexism she's encountered in life and in the music industry. Collier has encountered calls from members of the industry to dress in sexy clothes and to not rock the boat, but has successfully taken hold of her own career.

“The opening lines are a piercing statement of the overused, antiquated, and tired views within the industry. And the lyrics of the second verse demonstrate how the industry attempts to put and keep women ‘in their place’ by undermining them,” she recounts, continuing, “I find that most artists I admire - namely, Prince, James Brown, and Bonnie Raitt, went against the grain and did things that people hadn’t thought of before and that people hadn’t seen before, changing the industry as they went. This song is an assurance that I will continue to choose to fight quietly or publicly, if needed, to represent myself how I want to be represented in this industry and that I will not allow someone else to define who I am. It’s also a statement of hope that the industry is, can, and will continue to progress.”

Of “Wild as a Rainstorm,” Collier says, “‘Wild As A Rainstorm’ is a love letter to the next generation — particularly my little sisters – who feel out of place in the current world. I’m hoping that this song and my journey to recognize my own personal power might inspire another to choose to take their own path when repeatedly arriving at forks in the road.”

Collier takes on multiple roles, writing the songs, producing the album, arranging horns and all instrumental and vocal parts, playing acoustic and electric guitars and alto and tenor saxophones, flute, as well as singing the lead and background vocals. Also on the album are legendary Hi Records organ player Rev. Charles Hodges (Al Green, Bettye LaVette, Ann Peebles, Alex Chilton, Robert Cray); and frequent Collier collaborators Blues Music Award-winning guitarist Laura Chavez (Sue Foley, Mike Ledbetter & Monster Mike Welch); bassist Scott Sutherland (Elvin Bishop); and Byron Cage (Otis Taylor).

The songwriter/bandleader made her Chicago Blues Festival debut this year, in front of tens of thousands. Best known in the blues world – she’s a twelve-time Blues Music Award nominee and four-time winner, including for the monumental Contemporary Blues Female Artist of the Year, Horn Player of the Year, and B.B. King Entertainer of the Year this year – *Do It My Own Way* finds her influenced by soul artists like Mavis Staples, Sharon Jones, James Brown, and Aretha Franklin.

Blues Blast Mag said, “Vanessa is an important part of the future of the blues.” Born in Texas, growing up in Maryland, launching her career in Philadelphia, and now residing in South Carolina, Collier grew up listening to an eclectic variety of music. After graduating from Berklee College of Music, she joined blues legend Joe Louis Walker’s band, going solo at his urging, and has become a notable artist “whose rise to the top is nothing short of meteoric” (*Making a Scene*). She has opened concerts for Blues Traveler. Her prior studio album, *Heart On The Line*, spent nine weeks in the Billboard Blues Album Chart top 15.