



Artist Bio

From a region where country/western and hip-hop own the large live music venues, Gwen Hughes is probably the best rustic jazz singer you haven't heard of yet.

Despite her undeniable talent, with three CDs to her credit, and voted Atlanta's favorite jazz/swing singer twice in the past three years, Hughes and the Retro Jazz Kats regularly make it on to such local-magazine short lists as "The Top Three Atlanta Bands That Should Have Contracts But Don't." On stage, the petite, shimmering chanteuse with the long mane of red curls seems to personify feminine. Then she opens her mouth.

Jazz? Pop? Post-modern melodic posturing? Bluegrass? Funkified low-carb song styling? Well, you won't find her in the sale bin with Perry Como, that's for sure. And a girl who won't stick to the melody isn't going to last long at the front of a pop band either. The self-monikered "love child of Hank Williams and Peggy Lee" is, in the end, best described as a fusion artist – a fusion of bluegrass and rock and jazz.

Gwen's trademark bare feet are planted squarely in the tradition of cabaret, revealing her early days in musical theatre and straight drama. After paying her dues in cities with a single Holiday Inn and a piano, then losing her regular gig at an Atlanta hotel shortly before the Centennial Olympics, her future as a lounge lizard seemed uncertain.

She responded with her first CD, *Torch Life*, which birthed her wildly successful "Kool Kat Lounge A-Go-Go" show – replete with cigarette girls, jugglers, comedians and a 14-piece band. Next came two more CDs in a single year: the introspective studio recording *Lost and Found* and a spontaneous, live release, *The Misplaced Martini*. Both of her original offerings have had Grammy entry, and individual tracks have been recognized by National Public Radio, Just Plain Folks and CDBaby. Along the way, she has crooned in Paris and Prague, collaborated on a film about Elvis impersonators, and appeared as a character in a detective novel. Her latest quirky spin is jazz covers of Led Zeppelin songs.