

Album Review ...

Pursuit

by Jamie Cullum

IT DON'T MEAN A THING IF AIN'T GOT THAT SWING!

Jamie Cullum's fourth new album is jazzy, versatile and experimental. England's favourite ruffle-haired jazz singer and skilled piano player has again delivered something beautiful: jazz, Latin, pop and dance all combine into one funky and original sound. It's wholly impossible to listen to the CD and sit still – I dare anyone to try.

People who have followed Jamie from the beginning will see the tremendous creative progress he has made. His first album, *Pointless Nostalgic* (Candid, 2002) contained only two self composed songs, the rest all being jazz standards or rearranged pop songs, such as Radiohead's 'High and Dry'. This time Jamie, often in collaboration with his brother Ben, has composed all but a couple of the songs on the album himself. Cullum has developed from one of the many crooners of the business to someone with his own style.

Jamie Cullum is a jazz singer who likes to flirt with pop: he has made rearrangements of songs by Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Buckley and Pharrell Williams. On *Pursuit* Jamie Cullum has redone Rihanna's 'Don't stop the Music'. I thought the original song by Rihanna was incredibly commercial and unoriginal, like a



lot of Rihanna's music. Honestly, I have totally lost track of Rihanna's singles and to me they all sound the same. This new version I can actually listen to without being the slightest bit disgusted! Although Cullum flirts with pop and other musical styles, he is, in essence, still a jazz singer. His lazy, jazzy timing in his singing and piano playing make that clear. The numerous great improvisations are proof that Jamie and his musicians are all excellent players. Nevertheless there's only one true jazz standard on the album: 'Just one of those things', by Cole Porter, backed up by the veterans of the Count Basie Orchestra.

Snobbish jazz lovers might say Cullum is too poppy for jazz and some people might well agree. But I don't care whatever you call his music, or in whichever box you want to put it. Cullum is a great performer, and a sympathetic guy. For me that's enough.

If you demand a rating: four out of five.

by Anna Visser