



*I love finding lyrics that have been out there and just bringing them back to our ears. It's like reading a poem at a different time of your life, or watching a movie—you go back and watch it years later, and it means something different to you.*

—Nicole Henry

# Nicole Henry

This acclaimed Miami vocalist continues to scramble genres

Written by JOHN THOMASON

Songs come to Nicole Henry in myriad ways. Regarding Joan Armatrading's "Love and Affection," "I've loved it since 1996, when a boyfriend of mine gave me a mixtape for Christmas," she recalls. "And that was one of the songs on it. I just remember playing it over and over."

Her version of Rodgers and Hart's "I Didn't Know What Time it Was" owes its origins to "laying at the beach with my mom, and I heard some house-music version of a jazz tune. I heard this tempo, and I thought, where can I apply something like that to another song?"

Maria Muldaur's "Midnight at the Oasis" was recommended to Henry by her sister some seven years before Henry finally recorded it, as well as the aforementioned tunes, on her celebrated 2021 album *Time to Love Again*. "It's fun; it's like, let's take a little here, a little there," she says. "I grew up listening to all kinds of music, from classical to Pointer Sisters to Aretha Franklin. And I'm a child of the '80s and MTV, so I was a member of the Wham! fan club. I've got everything in my bag."

Henry, a Pennsylvania native, has mostly called South Florida home since she earned her degree, in communications and theatre, at the University of Miami. The North Miami Beach resident has released eight albums since 2004, achieving a national reach. She has performed more than 3,500 concerts in more than 20 countries, and her music regularly wins awards and charts on *Billboard*.

Though often characterized as a smooth jazz singer, Henry enjoys discovering new arrangements for songs by a wide range of artists, from Sade to Frank Sinatra, Bob Marley to Fleetwood Mac. She will bring these eclectic sensibilities to Festival of the Arts Boca on March 10.

**1 What will you be performing at Festival of the Arts?** There's definitely going to be music from *Time to Love Again*. ... So it's going to be a fun, big production with the horn section and the percussionists, and my core four-piece band. I also have a new CD coming out in the first quarter of 2023, and it's

a tribute to one of my favorite jazz legends, Nancy Wilson.

**2 Interesting use of the word 'again' in your album *Time to Love Again*. Is that a comment on the strife we've all been through the past couple of years?** It's a political statement. It's a statement

about our civilization as a whole, not only on the national level but internationally. And I say civilization because I refer to history, and how the world always ebbs and flows, and we just have to be careful where we're ebbing to. It needs to flow more in the direction of love and humanity. And I know the arts are so helpful in assisting with that. That was really the statement. All of the songs on the album are covers. These are songs that I wanted people to love again. ... I love finding lyrics that have been out there and just bringing them back to our ears. It's like reading a poem at a different time of your life, or watching a movie—you go back and watch it years later, and it means something different to you.

**3 I feel like audiences have come back from the pandemic hungrier for live experiences that move them, and more appreciative of performers such as you. Have you noticed that?**

It's a mix, because I've been really fortunate where the shows that I've done on a national level have had a good response as far as audience attendance, but on a larger scale, perform-

ing-arts theaters are struggling in a different way, because [people] seem to be going to smaller venues. People say, "it feels so good to be back out again; you don't know what we've missed, or what you've given us." It's beautiful to be appreciated.

**4 What's your process for selecting material that works for you?**

I have always been a lover of music, and it's 50/50—the groove or the lyrics. I believe any song can or should be redone. This last album is almost equal parts my band. That's why I put on Spotify my quartet's name on the album. These guys know me, we've created my sound, and continue to create my sound over the years. Most of the arrangements on *Time to Love Again* are ones we've come up with in our rehearsals or live performances.

**5 What would be the most left-field selection in your catalog—something the average listener might be surprised that you would interpret?**

Something rock 'n' roll. When I did my live '70s album, and I did "Stuck in the Middle With You," that was really fun.



## IF YOU GO

**WHAT:** Nicole Henry  
**WHERE:** Mizner Park Amphitheater, 590 Plaza Real, Boca Raton  
**WHEN:** March 10, 7:30 p.m.  
**COST:** \$15-\$100  
**CONTACT:** 561/571-5270, festivalboca.org



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RAFAEL BALCAZAR