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## Jazz singer to celebrate new album in St. Petersburg concert

By [CURTIS ROSS](#) | The Tampa Tribune

Career was pulling Seattle-based jazz singer Whitney James to New York City. Love was pulling her to Florida. She chose both.

So James splits her time between a "little teeny apartment" in New York and a home in Tierra Verde.

"I love the balance it gives me," James said. "I need that peace and quiet and reflection just for a happy life."

James' split decision has given the Tampa area jazz scene an excellent addition to its roster. She'll celebrate the release of her debut CD, "The Nature of Love," at The Palladium in St. Petersburg on Friday night.

Although James draws from the same Great American Songbook as other jazz singers (and pop singers trying to resuscitate their careers), "The Nature of Love" is anything but the same old.

James went far beyond the familiar standards in choosing the program for her debut disc.

"Part of my journey as a singer has been finding these obscure beauties and giving them a new interpretation," James said.

Among the tunes James tackles are "Tenderly," more familiar in its instrumental version than with lyrics, and "The Peacocks," a particularly demanding piece for a vocalist.

"I love a challenge," James said.

Of course, James still performs songs such as the Gershwins' "Summertime," songs in just about every jazz singer's catalog.

"I love that song," James said. "'Summertime' is a great song to stretch out on but I think part of what makes singing interesting is finding new and challenging material and reinterpreting it."

Ultimately, though, the song's lyrics are the deciding factor.

"I'm so attracted to the beauty of the melody and the complexity of the harmonics but I have to connect to the lyrics," James says. "It's an art form. I think that's what I enjoy, singing these beautiful lyrics that are so picturesque. It's like going to a movie in your mind."

For Friday's show, James will be backed by her longtime pianist, Joshua Wolff, plus bassist Alejandro Arenas and drummer Mark Feinman, with Jeremy Powell on saxophone.

### ON TOUR

**Whitney James**

**WHEN:** 8 p.m. Friday

**WHERE:** The Palladium, 253 Fifth Ave. N., St. Petersburg; (727) 822-3590

**COST:** \$20