



By **MARTY HUGHLEY**  
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## Jazzy Mammina's triumphant return

As the organizer of several jazz festivals around the country, including the Mt. Hood Jazz Festival, Bill Royston gets a lot of unsolicited records. "One year I counted," he says, "I got about 1,700 CDs in the mail, many of them from people I've never heard of."

Out of that sea of unknowns, Royston figures, he might find three or four acts worth booking. Sometimes, though, a gem is just waiting to be discovered. A few years ago at a jazz convention in New York, singer Jenna Mammina handed Royston a demo disc. "I don't think she realized how many records someone like me gets; but hers really grabbed my attention," he recalls. Royston eventually put her on the bill at the Mt. Hood festival, where she quickly grabbed a lot more attention.

Mammina's second-stage set was the festival's surprise hit. Full of easygoing wit and an interpretive approach that mixed jazz chops with pop charm - especially in a bluesy reading of Elvis Costello's "watching the Detectives" that included a long, improvised coda about TV cops - the performance seemed to transform her listeners from strangers into dear friends.

"That no one knew me didn't matter," Mammina said in a recent phone interview. "We just said, 'We're going to do what we do, what we like to do, and hopefully people will like it.'" And they did.

"I was so high from the whole experience, and I looked out and there was this standing ovation. It was a really incredible feeling."

By the time Mammina (who stopped to put in an excited call to her mentor, the great jazz singer, Abbey Lincoln) made it over to the on-site Borders Books & music booth, all 100 copies on hand of her album "Under the Influence" had been sold, and the autograph line was so long that she had to miss one of the festival's other high points, the set by piano legend McCoy Tyner.

Since then, Mammina says, she's received a lot more Portland orders through her website ([www.jennamammina.com](http://www.jennamammina.com)) and the area Borders stores have been selling the album. And the fans who fell under the influence at Mt. Hood will have the chance to imbibe again over the next few days, as Mammina returns to the Portland area for several performances. She'll be accompanied by her long-time guitarist, Andre Bush, and - on her Friday and Saturday night gigs at Jazz de Opus - the stalwart Portland bassist Tom Wakeling.

Along with good musical instincts, her biggest asset may be an appealing personality that connects with listeners right away. Together, they're allowing Mammina to emerge from the sea of unknowns with a splash.