

QUOTES

"A major talent."

- Thom Jurek, All Music

"Maximum Seductiveness."

- John Murph, NPR Music

"José James is a class act."

- John Fordham, The Guardian

"A natural intimacy that very few people have."

- Andy Bey

"A well-seasoned newcomer shakes up Lincoln Center."

- Steve Smith, Time Out New York

"Excellent debut from jazz's new rising star. José James is unquestionably a jazz singer with a difference."

- Charles Waring, Mojo

"Outside of Sade, few contemporary artists can match James' smooth voice, head-nodding beats and cosmic atmospherics."

- Jeff Weiss, LA Times

"The rawness is daring, and James has an unconventional vocal style, a deep baritone that's soft and elegant and at times haunting – like a male Billie Holiday, a darker Lou Rawls or in a lot of ways a human adaptation of Coltrane's sax work."

- Chris Riemenschneider, Star Tribune

"Beats or no beats, this boy has something going on. Minneapolis-born José James is blessed with the sort of honeyed baritone that would have made him a jazz star in whichever decade he emerged from."

- Louis Pattison, BBC Music

"A rising jazz star... Spectacular... There's nothing tentative or delicate about his voice, which carries marks of jazz vocalists and also soul singers from Marvin Gaye to Barry White."

- John Caramanica, New York Times

"I thought singers like this didn't exist anymore, I was wrong, José James is here to remind us why we love music so much!"

- Gilles Peterson, BBC Radio One

"James has the coiled power of a great singer and the tenderness at the heart of Coltrane's music. Quite superb."

- Stephen Graham, Jazzwise Magazine

"The strongest performances of the day belonged to the baritone singer José James... In front of a quintet including his former teacher the pianist Junior Mance, Mr. James sang standards: "Work Song," "Georgia on My Mind," "Body and Soul," "Every Day I Have the Blues," "What Is This Thing Called Love?" Each was a complete performance.

He kept his projection even, using his full cry ultra-sparingly; he was focused and careful, with clear-minded improvisations that looked, in the manner of Miles Davis or Betty Carter, for the single right note. It was a show that complimented the audience's intelligence."

- Ben Ratliff, NY Times

“Stripped down and captivatingly raw, this is bonafide jazz all the way. In an era ruled by songbook clones, the arrival of Brooklyn based vocalist José James is a breath of fresh air.”

– Thomas Barlow, BBC Music

“José James is the real deal!”

– Junior Mance

Review of
FOR ALL WE KNOW

“James approaches such familiar lyrics as those of *Body and Soul*, *Lush Life* and the title track with a stillness and purity bordering on the reverential, which very effectively rekindles the embers of these old songs. *Embraceable You* does have something of Nat Cole’s velvety mid-tone and softly ecstatic high sounds, but James brings a new magic to the art of maximising nuances very quietly (as well as launching occasional bursts of defiance out of the prevailing hush that make you jump), and the originality of the partnership is strikingly emphasised in the mix of spooky, abstract piano strings-sweeps and reharmonised lines on *Body and Soul*, and the chilling matter-of-factness of *Lush Life*. For the most part, this is a creative contemporary redefinition of low-lights music, with the lights down to barely a glimmer.”

– John Fordham, The Guardian

Review of
BLACKMAGIC

“On *Blackmagic*, James forges deeper into 21st century soul and experimental territory, without giving up his jazz chops. Enlisting Flying Lotus and a number of other producers, this is a late-night, groove record that allows hip-hop, club jazz, and lithe, funk to accent—rather than drive—his smooth, sultry baritone. His approach, while more innovative this time out, feels no less organic. The set kicks off with “Code,” produced by Flying Lotus. A Rhodes piano, congas, languid bassline, the sounds of scratchy vinyl, backing vocals, and ambient sounds underscore James’ vocal; phrasing only a few words at a time

as hip hop beats and skittering loops permeate his lines. Likewise, the ethereal title track shivers with sensual invitation via a mercurial groove created by Flying Lotus with guitars, elegantly caressed snares, and James answering his more declamatory sung lines with crooning improvisations. "Lay You Down," is a neo-soul baby-maker, with a handclap à la D'Angelo as the basis for its pulse. James' airy delivery is the melodic instrument as horns, Rhodes, bass, and drums fill the space dimensionally. "Warrior" is an uptempo groover using dub Benga's "Emotions" dub step rhythm as its ground before kit drum breaks, basses, and the woven textures of acoustic and electric pianos push from underneath; James chants/sings in call-and-response with himself. "Detroit Loveletter" is a tell-tale Moodymann production. It's an utterly seductive soul-by-cut-groove ballad, with a funky shimmering bassline, dreamy backing vocals, and wistful keys; James' vocal hovers above this mix. The grain in his voice beckons the listener to pleasures unnamed but unmistakable. As a whole, Blackmagic's is skillfully sequenced and intelligently arranged to avoid neo-soul or jazz clichés—there isn't a hint of artifice on it. This is 21st century jazzed-out soul at its best; and in the spirit of both traditions, it creates something new from traces of the familiar."

– Thom Jurek, All Music

Review of THE DREAMER

"The Dreamer, Brooklyn-based James' debut album, has star quality... James' core band—pianist Nori Ochiai, bassist Alexi David and drummer Steve Lyman—is stunning. Muscular, but loosely, casually so; morphing seamlessly between straight-ahead, funk and hip-hop rhythms, and demonstrating that a lot more unites these musics than divides them. The guest artists are a treat too. Pianist Junior Mance (one of James' tutors at the New School) makes his blues-drenched presence felt on "Spirits Up Above," and trumpeter Omar Abdulkarim's robust solo on the title track brilliantly offsets James' breathy, astral-jazz delivery... This is a five-star, totally delicious—and for someone who'd just about given up on jazz vocalists, unexpected—smash of a debut."

– Chris May, All About Jazz