



Making a Comeback

Julie Blair

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Jazz pianist Liz Randall is reeling from her wife's death and struggling to keep their band together. An invitation to play at the prestigious Monterey Jazz Festival is an opportunity she can't turn down, and a challenge she might not be up to until she enlists the help of a mysterious neighbor who's surprisingly knowledgeable about jazz.

When Jac Winters reluctantly agrees to help, a past she wants to forget threatens to destroy the carefully ordered life she's built with her guide dog, Max, in the quiet town of Carmel-by-the-Sea.

With music and love swirling around them like ocean currents, will Liz and Jac play it safe or risk everything on making a comeback?

Making a Comeback Details

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From Reader Review Making a Comeback for online ebook

Maria says

Honestly i was reluctant to read this book because i don't usually like tragedy in the beginning of a book but it captured me. The characters were so complex and their development so beautiful, the jazz theme gave the story a nice touch. I also liked the slow burn of the friendship building through the the book.

~ * K E L L I E * ~ says

A bit of a slow start... I'm glad I persevered as it turned into a lovely story of two lost souls.

lov2laf says

This book felt uneven. Sometimes I liked it and other times less so which makes this a really mixed read for me.

I'll say that the author tackled a few tough subjects so I give her kudos for that. Namely, the first major issue is that Liz's love-of-her-life spouse of fourteen years died from cancer six months prior to the start of the book and that definitely is not the easiest atmosphere in which to build a romance.

For this reason, it really takes a long time for any romance in the book to kick in. I was more than half way through wondering when it was going to happen because neither character seemed to want it. The read is more a story of friendship and healing with a romance slapped on towards the very end.

Because it's so different, if you're looking for a shake-up of the usual formulaic romance and want something unorthodox this may be a good choice for you.

One thing of interest is that Jac is blind and I thought that was pretty well represented. Jac, has her own past she's struggling with and is an ice-queen for the first half of the book because of it.

Despite the heavier issues, if the book has a tone it's more about hope, redemption, and taking chances when you least want to. As romances go, for Jac, cue Shalamar's "The Second Time Around" and, for Liz, Presley/UB-40's "Can't Help Falling In Love With You".

What did I like?

I actually thought that Liz with her grief, loneliness, and guilt from her wife's death were well portrayed as was the slow burn of the relationship with Jac. Rushing into a new romance wouldn't have worked and luckily the author didn't go that route.

I like seeing authentically imperfect and even dysfunctional parents sometimes and how they impact the family around them. In this case, that would be Liz's father and I wanted to drop kick him. The only thing I didn't like was that Liz went waaaay too easy on him.

Music was obviously well researched and integrated into the plot. And all of the supporting cast was pretty

decent. I especially liked the sisters to both Jac and Liz.

What I didn't like?

There is a lopsided feel to the story. What are we going into it for? If it's romance, there's very little of it. I actually saw NO romantic chemistry between the two leads for the majority of the book and, if asked, I would have told the author there was no way I'd buy into one occurring. In the last third of the book it's like a switch is flipped and we're told love is now in play THEN shown, like a cart before the horse scenario. I will say, that once Blair goes the romantic arc I do start to believe it but, still, the romance itself is lopsided because it's not all roses and each person is not on the same page.

If you're going into the book to read about two women's daily drama dealing with pain, building friendships, exploring history, family dynamics, and so on, it's heavy there. So, a satisfying book about women's friendships and overcoming obstacles? Sure.

Style-wise, the narrative is choppy. Sometimes that's in the dialogue and sometimes in the fast forwarding of events. This could be jumps of a weeks, months, or even transitioning from one area to the next. I have a mixed feel on this, too. Sometimes I liked the time jumps but simple transitions from one area to the next were abrupt.

Dialogue on the whole was good (minus the choppy parts) but at the very end it starts to go into a cheesy, cringe territory.

And, at times, I had to reread passages because either knowing who was speaking was confusing or how something played out didn't match with my first read through. Example being the reason we discover Jac is such an ice-queen. I was like, "Wait, what happened and who was doing what?"

And then there's Jac. The story around her character was just too out there for me so I questioned its authenticity several times. Not the blind aspect but her career. It gets spoilery if I go into the details of why. And the reason for her ice-queen persona? Parts of it I get but it's ambiguous if drunk driving was involved and, if it was, I have no sympathy. I almost put the book down at that point because I initially interpreted that it was but on a second read through it's less clear.

And then a couple of peeves: Drinking occurs a lot in the story. It's another read where wine or alcohol makes an appearance at every gathering. I don't mind if it's an occasional mention in a book but when it's all the time I don't care for it. And, then there's a dog present during the intimacy scenes which, when they occur, are steamy. I get that Max is a seeing eye dog so Jac relies on him but did he need to be in the same room for these scenes? Ack. ::shudders::. To be clear, he's not involved in any way, he's just there in the room. But, still!

So, overall, a bumpy read. Some aspects were really well done and others I didn't enjoy. 3.5 stars

Bib says

No doubt the author writes well, smooth flowing and captivating at the start. But as I progressed to the later half of the book, I thought the push and pull thingy bit got a little tiresome. I liked the author's writing style though and will read other books by her. I would have given this book a 3.5 star rating if it's available.

Danni Mladenovic says

I'm very fond of this book... It was a very nice read, and it stays in a category "to come back to occasionally". There isn't a thing I was bothered by while reading it. Well done!

Diane Wallace says

'NetGalley ARC provided by The Publisher in exchange for a honest review'

**"The writer's responsibility is to increase,develop our senses,expand our vision,heighten our awareness and enrich our articulateness as readers..'

Fairly okay story!

Right from the start this story was very misleading and not just because of the title it was about much more like the chemistry between these two leads who i think had no character development or anything by the author for that matter maybe the only positive thing on their side and that readers could tell were some kind of knowledge in the history of music. Furthermore,the sad part is that both only got together only because of one loosing her partner. No depth and not much substance to the writing or storytelling-- just an okay ending...

Marilyn says

I loved this book. (I loved it so much I stayed up until 3AM reading last night - which is a recent record.) The book is set in Carmel, which is about an hour south of where I live. Blair does a nice job of bringing the location to life, and I enjoyed the authentic feel of the Carmel locations. In addition to a romance with plenty of chemistry, there are interesting relationships with siblings and parents. Both main characters had significant emotional barriers to overcome and there is a noticeable amount of angst, which I do enjoy ;). Finally, the real star of this book is the description of the music and the relationship the main characters have to music. You could change, or even remove, any of the other elements of the story that I've already mentioned and the book would still work. But the music brought the story to life, and was what kept me riveted to the story.

Justina Johnson says

Oh my goodness, this book has music at its heart and foundation. There are two astoundingly gifted women each battling different pressures that come with mind-boggling intricacies. They cope as best they can while attempting to maintain a functional equilibrium that allows them to sustain a lifeline to the world of music, preserving and protecting talents and creative treasures hanging in the balance. This book unquestionably blew me away and I definitely recommend it. Exquisitely enveloping!

Liz Randall has suffered a devastating loss. Her wife, who was oh so much more, succumbed to leukemia. Liz seems so lost and appears to be dangling by a thread. That thread is born from music, takes its strength from music, and I think it puts her in just the right place at just the right time. She literally bumps into possibly the answer, the light, and maybe the most cantankerous entity on the planet! Surprisingly, this

woman who is now blind is a link to Liz's musical soul and a guide to Liz's musical reincarnation. Nevertheless, Liz still has a staggering journey to make, family historical bonds to break free from, and a purely amazing rebirth to live through. I cried and soared on the wings of Liz Randall's thoroughly enthralling journey. Melodiously mesmerizing!

Jac Winters is blind and has muscular skeletal difficulties because of complications from a car accident approximately ten years ago. She inadvertently encounters Liz because of a miscalculation Liz makes as she is carrying a large painting. This painting extraordinarily links Liz to a family member of Jac's. Phenomenal! However, it is Jac's mysteriously astute technical skills as if she were a musician that provide a much needed lifeline for Liz as they assembled Liz's first live album. Jac assists Liz through that rigorous process that must be completed as soon as possible. During this exhilarating collaboration it is definitely Liz who appears way more incapacitated than the clearly physically disabled Jac. Yet they both seemingly have deeply troubling emotional issues with tendrils thick and complexly woven through their personal, public, and professional lives. Jac is a puzzle wrapped in a disguise, hidden and withdrawn from the world. Staggeringly splendiferous!

This story is definitely a roller coaster ride with soaring highs, gut-wrenching vertical plummet, and it is not to be missed. Plus all the sublime musical complexities put this book in a rarified world usually not open to many in life, yet here everyone gets to live the magic as two women make a comeback!

NOTE: This book was provided by Bold Strokes Books for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

Agirlcandream says

Liz Randall is left in stasis after the death of her wife, Teri. Her jazz band, Up Beat has lost their drummer and Liz has lost her muse and her way.

Jac Winters has been living as a recluse in a cottage in Carmel-by-the-Sea. Her past haunts her. She copes by taking daily walks along the beach with her guide dog Max and keeping a low profile.

As the book blurb suggests, Liz and Jac meet and discover they share a love of jazz music. Can two women with a whole lot of personal baggage find a path towards a life together?

If you like music and love jazz you will be swept up by this novel. Blair writes with knowledge and authority and had me highlighting albums by jazz legends I plan to listen to in the future. Instead of being a distraction, this love of all things jazz shared by Jac and Liz is the bond they need to overcome some early challenges in their friendship.

The author packs a whole lot of living into her main and secondary characters. We learn a great deal about Liz and her family, her past and her potential. While the focus remains on Liz, there were times when her family and their issues threatened to derail the main story. Jac's backstory is revealed slowly. Depending on how impatient a reader you are this can be a good or bad thing. In it for the long haul, I enjoyed filling in the gaps and unravelling the reasons for Jac's need for privacy and her cool detachment.

This is a romance novel and with it comes the predictable handwringing and uncertainty. In this romance both women carry all kinds of former relationship issues. It is a lot to wade through. If you are a patient

reader you will be rewarded with a lovely and memorable HEA.

Ms. Blair takes her time building a love story. If you are willing to put in the time, you will be rewarded with a heartfelt romance.

ARC received from publisher via NetGalley.

Pippa says

4.5 Stars

Liz Randall is a jazz pianist, who is still lost in grief after losing her wife six months ago. She is struggling to keep the band together, and struggling to compose any new music.

Jac Winters write the best jazz blog around, and when she is persuaded to help Liz select the songs to go onto a tribute album, she reluctantly agrees. She holds many secrets, while requiring Liz to reveal herself in her music. Can they find common ground, and will Liz still want to be around if Jac reveals who she really is?

This was a slow burn romance, with two interesting, and complex characters. I really liked this book.

I found the musical elements interesting, and I'm not a musician, nor a jazz aficionado. Despite that, Blair managed to keep me spellbound by the intricate weaving of emotion and music, and how each reveals the other.

I have read Blairs two preceding books, unrelated in content, and found them good at the time. However, this book shows a clear progression of skill from Blair's first book, and I couldn't put it down. I highly recommend this as a slow burn tale of two women trying to find a way to get together when both of them are hurting.

Darlene Vendegna says

I understand why this book is winning awards. I couldn't put it down. Not only has Julie Blair created intriguing, like-able characters with unexpected levels of depth, but her descriptions of places and music are absolutely beautiful. As the story opens, both women are broken, certain that their lives, as they knew them, are over and they will never find love again. Their friendship blossoms over their shared love and knowledge of music. The gorgeous town of Carmel comes alive and feels virtually a character. I could smell the sea air and see the quaint shops. Her descriptions of the music and improvisation have me reaching for my own jazz albums to listen with fresh ears. A solid well written romance and so much more.

P. Industry says

Liz's wife is dead. In her grief, she feels like she is losing everything - not just her deceased partner and succor, but also the music which they made together. The band she leads is rudderless and album-less. The buzz that Liz needs to be successful is fading away. And her grief makes her careless - she whacks Jac Winters with a large painting accidentally when she's trying to put it in her car.

Jac is blind and riddled with pain from a long-ago car accident. She really didn't need to be hit with a large painting, and she wants Liz's subsequent attempts to befriend her even less. But she also seems to know a tremendous amount about music, and that's a connection which is difficult to sever.

What follows is a complex story of Jazz, character growth, and love. But especially music. Speaking generally, sometimes in books that frame the narrative around a band or a sound, that music is more of an afterthought to the romantic plot and serves as a kind of "MucGuffin". You could swap the singing of the protagonist with a dozen other potential professions and the book would probably be fine. **This** book would not be fine. **This** book breathes Jazz - it is a separate force through which the main characters talk with the world. It is the symbol of their healing. It is also the prime way that they both fall in love.

This is a very difficult narrative to speak of without spoiling anything. Suffice to say the book is technically excellent (barring a few glitches - for example, some characters seem know each other before they're introduced, even though that introduction is a plot point). It's well paced, well plotted. It's satisfying.

Four stars.

Lexxi Kitty says

This is not a review but a few words, about 'what happened.'

A day or two ago I was at the 88% completed position and . . . just stopped reading. The specific reason eludes me now. But I was 'inches' away from finishing, so I took the five or so minutes to read the end. I either had disconnected myself too much from the book, or I'd have felt the same way if I had or hadn't taken a break there.

First thing I noticed is that I literally did just walk away from the book - as in I had apparently been in the middle of a sentence when I just stopped. Second thing I noticed was that I was detached, numb to what unfolded. Didn't particularly care. Which is, in its way, strange how I had a moment there wherein I flashed to a kind of 3D like experience during one moment; detached and yet there, eh? Heh. I do not normally, I am not normally 'there' and/or 'know'/feel/whatever . . . but there was a moment when a knee was pulled up and back and the scene was vivid in my mind, good or bad. So, except for a moment or two there of vivid connection, I was numb during the last 12% of the book.

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About 14 years before the start of this book Liz Randall, jazz pianist, meet and fell in love with a woman named Teri. Over the next 14 years (from that moment), they formed two jazz bands - Liz on the piano, Teri on the drums (I do not normally think of jazz bands having drums, but I never paid much attention to jazz). They kept getting to the edge of success, but keep stumbling. First because Teri got diagnosed with cancer and they had to deal with that; then the second time, the illness came back and ultimately killed Teri.

It's been six months since Teri's death when the book opens. Liz is kind of wandering in a daze, attempting to put together an album made up of live recordings of their shows (of their band Up Beat). While in this daze, Liz wanders into a gallery to pick up painting for her asshole father's birthday (oops, sorry, yeah, her father is

a selfish asshole leach). Carrying the painting awkwardly, Liz stumbles, almost loses the painting, and then whacks a woman. Who proceeds to rudely bleed from a cut on her face.

That woman being Jac, the blind woman (what, for a good portion of the book, that is how Liz knew her - someone who she wants to be friends with, is blind, and is sister to the person who painted the painting Liz had gotten for her father). With Jac is Max, her guide dog.

Jac and Liz keep bumping into each other that day, and while Jac has no desire to have anything to do with things like 'friends' and the like, Liz does want something like that. And is persistent. Liz and Jac then proceed on something like a courtship – to become friends.

Others of importance in this novel: Hannah – Liz's out-of-work chef sister; Kevin – Liz's brother (& and his wife, Karen I think I recall); Peggy and her husband (Roger?) – Peggy being Jac's sister; and . . . whatever asshole father's name is. Oh, and Max – Jac's guide dog. Jac's parents make something of a cameo appearance but I got no real impression of them at all (despite several scenes that included them being all . . . there and stuff). Slightly larger than a cameo, but barely, are Kevin and his wife's kids (slightly more than a cameo because they get the chance to show how much of a dick Liz's father is – when he causes one of the children to bleed, and he just jokes about it). Oh, and there are three other members of the band – Regan, Sammy (the two are twins, or something like that), and Cassie. Other than Regan being kind of moody, Sammy making a joke that got repeated (hi, I'm Sam), and Cassie . . .um . . . being there, I do not really know anything about these three (well, other than that Cassie is, apparently, huge in the industry and knows everyone).

Plot points of interest: broken wrist (Liz); album to release; concert to prepare for; vacation (Hawaii); walking in Carmel-by-the-sea (often referred to as Carmel (though, apparently, Liz's grandmother insisted on it being called by its full name) was founded in 1902, located in Monterey County, California – heh – from the wiki on Carmel - “a prohibition on wearing high-heel shoes without a permit, enacted to prevent lawsuits arising from tripping accidents caused by irregular pavement”- the heh is because Liz broke her wrist from walking on the irregular pavement); stuff.

September 29 2016

Margaret says

I was provided with a free copy of this book via NetGally in exchange for an honest review.

Detailed score: 2.5

If I was describing this book through music rather than words [something that occurs frequently during this novel] then it would be a long, wailing, drawn out single note of frustration broken up with a few excited trills in the middle and a few low wailing notes of tear inducing sadness.

The first half of the book was a drawn out, overly long and irritating introduction to the main characters and their secret and not-so secret pains [Liz, the loss of wife Teri...Jac, something very very secretive and life altering that the author keeps hinting at and that we, as the reader, are meant to be interested in]. To be honest, if I only had the sample on which to decide if I was going to buy this book I don't think I would have gone there. In terms of opening / scene setting chapters this one would get 1/5. Long, drawn out and I wasn't given enough to go on to get 'into' the heads of the characters, esp Jac, to be interested in / barracking for

what happens next.

Once Jac, fiiiiiiiiinally decides to trust Liz and tell her about her secret that has left this character (view spoiler) a recluse for 10 years things start picking up [the angst around 'will we or won't we be friends got ooooooollldd very quickly]. I won't give away too many spoilers here but in the middle part of the book I was actually able to settle 'in' to the novel a bit a be carried along for the ride happily enough. I am a sucker for a 'dancing' scene bringing characters together and there were two such scenes in this book, both of which I though were done very nicely .

Thank goodness for this middle part of the book because what was meant to be the climax of the book (view spoiler) just fell flat. I was so, so sick of the unremitting angst by the end of the book that I wanted it to end to put me out of my misery rather than be the uplifting, heart-swelling, smile-making conclusion it was meant to be. (view spoiler)

The pacing of the book was off. Scenes that should have been covered in two sentences got two chapters whereas others that may have allowed some of the secondary characters to shine a little were overlooked. Character intentions and motivations are over-explained [a personal pet peeve - hate being made to feel like the author thinks I (as the reader) am an idiot] All the supporting characters are one dimensional and either good or bad with no in between [bandmates, Jac's parents, the two sisters = unrealistically good , Jac's ex husband and Liz's father = bad] . Musical metaphors are over used [look reader, look how much reasearch I did and how I understand that complex world of jazzzz]. Being a BSB publication you can trust that the editing from a gramatical perspective will be top notch, and this is no exception, but the novel really could have benefitted from a firmer editors hand in terms of the content of the novel itself.

I probably sound a bit harsh in this review but I think it's because I'm so disappointed. Despite the criticisms I've outlined above, there are some really nice moments in this book and the overall storyline is a good one - especially if, like me, you're a sucker for a 'celesbian' tale.

Overall, though, this book could have benefitted from a few more rehearsals before going solo.

Catherine says

I really enjoyed this book. The story line was focused around grief and finding happiness again through love. I thought the story line was spread out really well keeping you wanting more, making it difficult to put this book down!

I thought the author did a really good job in showing us the difficulty of moving on after you loose your life partner to illness. Is it ok to fall in love again? If yes, how soon can you fall in love after their death. Too often we judge people going through this horrible grief and put a time on when it's ok to move on and fall in love again. That's what I loved about this book we enjoy watching the two characters come out from the darkness and enjoy life again.

I will admit I got about 70% into the book and thought that we wouldn't have enough time to resolve the issues that were still swirling around in the storyline and thought we were going to have a rushed ending (which I hate) but I found that the story came together perfectly in the end and it didn't feel rushed at all.

The one aspect that I did struggle with in this book (and why it is 4 stars and not 5) is the flow of some of the dialog. Dialog is really important to me as a reader and found at times we were in conversations with someone and then all of a sudden we were in another moment. Which I can find myself losing a connection

to the book because I feel jerked out of the moment and thrown into another which can give me a slight disorientated feeling before I can get back on track with the story.

All in all I absolutely loved this book and would recommend it.

I was given this book by NetGalley for an honest review.
