

Stacy Sullivan at Metropolitan Room

Written by John Hogle
Sunday, 03 June 2007

Metropolitan Room at Gotham

One of the true tests of any cabaret performer is how much of their off-stage personality they can bring on stage with them. In the case of country-jazz thrush Stacy Sullivan, she scores high marks and passed that test with flying colors. With a warm smile that could light up Times Square, and a wry sense of humor mixed with her open-faced honesty, the gal's a winner. The sad news is that her local cabaret appearances are few and far between. As a proud member of the talented Sullivan family from Oklahoma, headed by big sister KT Sullivan, she lives in California and works mostly on the West Coast. Hopefully, that will change and we'll be seeing more of her on our shores.

In her very recent shows at Metropolitan Room at Gotham, where she appeared with musical director Tedd Firth and bassist David Fincke, she offered an eclectic program that was, at times, a mix of country fun and Manhattan sophisticate. With several prominent cabaret artists turning out to support her in the audience, this younger Sullivan breezed through an hour that fused her country roots with savvy jazz stylings. As in the past, she brought the country flavor to some well chosen evergreens like "How Little We Know" (Mercer/ Carmichael) and "So In Love" (Porter). With her medium sized cottony alto and homespun good looks, the lady is also no stranger to classic standards, and managed to bring a new sensibility to them, fused with more than a hint of ironic and emotional musical cross currents that are intriguing. At times, her warm voice was reminiscent of some contemporary country ladies like Trisha Yearwood.

Hers is not a big act or a grand act, but a sweet, warm, totally engaging act that works because she makes you feel like she's your kid sister up there in the spotlight just singing her heart out. In that regard, she's one of those quintessential performers whose love of singing communicates so well, that it gives the listener pleasure just to participate in the process. Stacy Sullivan embraces a room and reveals her self with a sincerity every other singer could learn from-especially in a town over-run with over-rated divas who have lots to learn about the art of cabaret performing. No frills. No gimmicks. Just an honest singer with a lot to offer.

The eclectic show had many memorable moments. Particular standouts included a tender reading of the riveting story song "Another Tuesday," by Tim Di Pasqua and Tom Andersen. With luck, this will pop up on her next album. Her natural heartfelt delivery perfectly embraced this poignant tale of a mother hearing from the child she gave up for adoption. Amanda McBroom's "Dreaming" was given a simple treatment that scored high marks. Blossom Dearie's "I Like You, You're Nice," was done with appropriate minimalist treatment befitting the legendary songwriter. Bob Dylan's "Simple Twist of Fate," which she described as "the perfect get-him-back song" projected a folksy incisiveness that recalled Joan Baez. I would suggest more folk material, as she does it so well.

An Introspective "Where Do You Start?" by Alan and Marilyn Bergman, became a heartfelt expression of romantic obsession that she handled with style. Many of her songs moved safely from songs of yearning, to deeper expressions of empathy and love. Mastering some lighter fare would enhance her set, as she has a wonderful sense of whimsy and wry humor when she banters with her audience. On a country song written by brother Tim Sullivan, she handles a fusion of country blues with a sly jazz twist that worked in spades.

Closing with a happy "Blue Skies" (Berlin), she once again showed the makings of a real jazzier, as she gave every simple word a purposeful intention.

While Sullivan needs to build her performing profile in Manhattan, she has the potential to become one of cabaret's leading ladies. After all, this is a lady with no attitude and less ego- a rarity in show business.