

## Jazz singer sensational; delivers gem of a concert

Winnipeg Free Press  
Monday, October 29, 2001  
Page: D4  
Section: Entertainment  
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Vanessa Rubin

Asper Foundation Jazz Performance

Berney Theatre

Oct. 28

4 out of 5 stars

SOME people seem to have it all. Vanessa Rubin has a wonderful voice, an easy stage presence and a trio that many other singers can only envy.

Yesterday, during two concerts at the **Asper Foundation Jazz Performances** series, Rubin ran the gamut from standards to Sondheim to Stevie (Wonder).

Her trio - Aaron Graves on piano, Yoron Israel on drums and Gerald Cannon on bass - opened the first set of the afternoon show without Rubin and you knew from the get-go it was going to be a great show with a trio this good holding down the fort.

Rubin kicked things off with Got The World On A String and her singing told the audience there'd be no fooling around that afternoon.

Rubin's vocals were obviously the main attraction, but pianist Graves was a delightful player and Rubin gave him time to strut his solo stuff as well as prove he is an excellent accompanist. Cannon draws such a rich tone from his bass, and Israel's brush work on the drums was outstanding. You can't say enough about the advantages of being able to maintain a working band with its tight sound.

Rubin performed several tunes from her new album *Girl Talk*, including *Matchmaker*, *Matchmaker*, *Won't Have To Say Goodbye*, a beautiful rendition of *Comes Love* and the title track, which evolved onstage into a conversation with the audience about love and life.

Rubin stands tall to sing up-tempo numbers, and perches on a stool for ballads but always seems at ease.

*One for My Baby (And One More for the Road)*, another selection from *Girl Talk*, was an audience pleaser with a great piano solo by Graves.

Rubin sings her share of standards, but maintains the "Great American Songbook is not closed. There are a lot of good contemporary songwriters," including Stevie Wonder, whose *Where Were You When I Needed You* took on a distinctly jazz flavour in Rubin's hands.

Rubin is, simply, a gem of a singer.

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Idnumber: 200110290061  
Length: 344 words