

Bronwyn Rucker Gives Speakeasy Singers New Life



Singer Bronwyn Rucker and Joe Franklin are happy after her recent standout performance at the Metropolitan Room in Manhattan.

Eagle photo by Harold Egeln

Entertains With Joe Franklin in 1920s and '30s 'Memory Lane'

By Harold Egeln
Brooklyn Daily Eagle

BROOKLYN — It was a magical, musical trip down "memory lane" thanks to cabaret star Bronwyn Rucker, who recently entertained at a live show celebrating her exciting new CD release *Bronwyn's Speakeasy* that got rave reviews from Brooklyn fans.

"What was the password that got you inside a speakeasy?" Bronwyn asked pioneering tele-

vision talk-show host Joe Franklin. "Joe sent me," he replied at the sold-out show recently at the Metropolitan Room off Fifth Avenue in Manhattan.

Franklin, the entertainment industry living legend, is famed for hosting his "Memory Lane" TV and radio programs for 60 years and is credited as creating the television talk show genre. Bronwyn, also an actor and playwright, collaborated with the "Nostalgia King" on the thor-

Please turn to page 2

Bronwyn Rucker Gives Speakeasy Singers New Life

Continued from page 1

oughly entertaining CD celebrating women singers of the 1920s and 1930s.

It was written and produced at Millrose Music with art direction by Joe Bly and associate producer Brian Gari, grandson of the great Eddie Cantor. The stage production was wonderfully directed by the award-winning Jay Rogers.

"With the passage of the 18th Amendment bringing prohibition on January 26, 1920, overnight a society of illegal speakeasies was born, an era that lasted until early 1933," Franklin noted. Bronwyn then added, "So many of the people whom I explored got their start in those years at speakeasies."

Bronwyn performed all aglow with heartfelt exuberance, passion, humor and pathos, tenderness and intensity in recreating performances with her own unique singing voice that propelled the audience through a singing time machine into a long-gone era when stars were born.

Adding to the joy and energy of the evening were Jerry Scott on piano and Saadi Zain on bass, wonderfully framing Bronwyn's music with the close-to-the-heart hallmark talent that her audiences love, bringing them back and making fans of new ones.

"It was an amazing performance!" said Kenneth Adams, the former Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce president who is now head of the statewide Business Council. "She made the singers all come alive as she sang a history lesson in a very entertaining way. Her knowledge of the era is fabulous."

Martin McQuade, a consultant to Bing Crosby Enterprises and a pop singer, attended the show and remarked, "Bronwyn, so evocative of the gilded age of American entertainment, took this veteran of American songs on a voyage to songs he didn't even know. Her

musical history lesson expanded my musical knowledge and her deliciously unique sound had me craving for more from this wonderful chanteuse. She infuses the evening with elegance. And who could ask for anything more?"

With a performance style savored by fans, Bronwyn wistfully sang "Melancholy Baby" by Ruth Etting, once called "American's sweetheart," and then went on to sing the bouncing happy song "Red, Red Robin" as sung by Lillian Roth in Earl Carroll's Vanities.

The happy song "Honey Bunch" as sung by vaudeville Jane Green was followed by the sad but hopeful determinism of "I'll Get By" as sung by café singer Aileen Stanley. With each song Bronwyn told the singers' stories, evoking their styles, such as Billie Holiday in "Sophisticated Lady" with Holiday's cadence and longing tone.

The bohemian nightclub life in Harlem and Greenwich Village was the backdrop for several of the singers. Franklin later noted, "Who better than Bronwyn to sing these tunes?"

Bronwyn, a Brooklyn resident, has several CD recordings. They include *Bright Blue* from 2004 and *Radon Daughters — A Radioactive Musical* written with Woody Regan, her longtime collaborator on Original Cast Records. *Bronwyn's Speakeasy* is the latest release on the OC label, and all her albums are available at J&R Music on Park Row.

Bronwyn was a pioneer in the forefront of solo woman performance artists with her autobiographical "Subway Named Desire" revue which was a regular at The Duplex, Eighty Eights and Don't Tell Mama (where this reporter saw an earlier version of "Speakeasy"), as well as the Manhattan Punch Line Theatre.

For more information and performance events, visit her web site at www.bronwynrucker.com.