

'A Night With Janis Joplin' Is a Spiritual Journey Through the Blues

The performance stole a piece of audience members' hearts Tuesday night at The Sharon.

By KRISTEN FIORE
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Audience members sat down Tuesday night in The Sharon to enjoy the rich instrumentals and strong earthy vocals from the musical, "A Night with Janis Joplin."

But they didn't stay sitting for long. By the end of the performance, nearly everyone was on their feet and dancing.

The musical was set up like a concert with Janis Joplin, played by Kelly McIntyre, reflecting on her life, her career and the music that inspired her between songs.

Mary and Boop Hanson, of the Village of Country Club Hills, came to the show dressed in tie-dye shirts. Mary went the extra measure, wearing long wavy hair, embroidered bell-bottom jeans, round sunglasses and peace sign earrings.

"I always sing Janis Joplin on karaoke," Mary said. "I am a Janis in my own way. She's my idol. She's everything I ever wanted to be."

While the show was a tribute to Joplin, it also was largely a tribute to the blues artists who inspired Joplin to create her own songs.

Artists like Etta James, Odetta, Bessie Smith, Aretha Franklin and Nina Simone stepped out of the shadows and performed their own songs throughout the show.

Ella Fitzgerald's "Summertime" was performed and transitioned into Joplin's "Summertime."

McIntyre gave a raw performance. Her vocals were unbelievably strong, and Joplin's character seemed to shine through her as she talked to the audience and took swigs from a bottle between songs. She got into the performance, kicking and punching the air while her long hair blazed behind her.

The whole cast wore outfits true to the time—bell-bottom



Submitted photo

The musical "A Night with Janis Joplin" hit the stage Tuesday night at The Sharon. The production tells the story of Joplin's life and musical influence.

pants, long shirts and flowy dresses with colorful psychedelic patterns.

Gloria and Peter Amber, of the Village of Pinellas, said that they're from Chicago, and "A Night with Janis Joplin" is the best show they've ever seen.

"It's dynamic, it's unbelievable," Gloria said. "She sounds just like Janis did. I saw Janis Joplin years ago in the 60s and she sounds just like her."

Peter thought that the crowd's enthusiasm showed how good the show was.

"Have you ever seen so many Villagers stand up during a show?" he said.

While the first half of the show was about the music that inspired Joplin, the second half was all about her own music.

McIntyre, her background singers and her eight-instrument band performed

songs such as "Piece of My Heart," "Maybe," "Me and Bobby McGee," "Ball and Chain" and "Stay with Me."

In between songs, she spoke about memories from being a kid and doing chores while listening to her mother's Broadway records to joining Big Brother and the Holding Company and moving to California.

Toward the end of the show, she expressed concerns about staying true to herself and even spoke ironically about death before singing, "I'm Gonna Rock My Way to Heaven."

But it wasn't melancholy at all. The audience was standing up, clapping and dancing.

"This show is transforming us back in time, and that's what everyone here needs," Gloria said.

Kristen Fiore is a staff writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5270, or kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com.

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