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Kelley Suttentfield—Cool, Understated Swing

Wednesday, September 21st, 2011

by Alix Cohen

Kelley Suttentfield, Matt Aronoff (bass), and guest—Master Guitarist, Joe Carbone, offer an evening of relaxed, melodic camaraderie that feels so intimate it's as if we're in someone's living room. Their palpable pleasure at playing with one another is evidenced by some of the most attentive stage listening and expressive reactions I've ever witnessed. Occasional notes that don't land squarely are easily forgiven in the overall enjoyment of an artful and original set including reinterpreted classics and rarely presented finds.

“Devil May Care” (Bob Dorough/Terrell P. Kirk Jr.) and “Slow Boat to China” (Frank Loesser) swing in smooth and easy. Neither sounds like old hat. The performer's phrasing is her own singular take, bringing freshness to the material. Unlike many jazz singers, Suttentfield never

sacrifices integrity for vocal gymnastics. Her embellishments are always in service of the song.

Caetano Veloso's *Coracao Vagabundo*, performed in Portuguese, is delivered with the requisite juggle sound and appealing simplicity, though perhaps not the longing implicit in its poetic verse. Suttentfield's mid range suppleness exudes comfort. Carbone rocks back and forth, side to side, eyes closed, creating waves with his delicate, wandering touch. Aronoff's bass is nicely smoky.

"West Coast Blues" (Wess Montgomery/Granville Burland), introduced as "the flip side of love," is a great old song, rarely sung by anyone outside of down-and-dirty blues concerts. Suttentfield slips n'slides with just the right attitude. Perhaps her southern childhood adds to the honey-cured, but peppery rendition. Carbone's face crinkles reaching for the top of a riff and smiles on his successful ride back. This is unquestionably a virtuoso. His skill adds inventive texture to every number. The song trails off with effective, musky scat.

On the heels of the mood comes a terrific syncopated arrangement of "The Thrill is Gone" (B. De Silva/Lew Brown/Ray Henderson). Aronoff has a good time with this one, leaning into the bass like a lover. Suttentfield tells it like it is without the usual torch crescendo or histrionics. It works. "The purest moments I can create come out of the quietest moments of song," she comments.

One of the show's happy surprises is the iconic "Twilight Time" (Buck Ram/ Morty Nevins, Al Nevins, Artie Dunn). You remember, *Heavenly shades of night are falling, it's twilight time...?* Written in the mid 1940s, the song is best remembered for the 1958 Platters record. Hearing it performed as a solo is something of a revelation; it has a sort of sweet gravitas. There's a reason things become iconic. Suttentfield rhythmically pats her side. A lilting guitar and bass break adds to the treat.

Up tempo pieces round out the well paced set, ending with a rendition of "Bye Bye Blackbird" (Mort Dixon/Ray Henderson) that feels like a wink and soft shoe.

There are three more "Mondays with Masters" scheduled. Judging by the first, they 'll be entertaining, unexpected, informal evenings. Also, I might add, exceedingly affordable.

To purchase Kelley Suttentfield's CD, *Where Is Love*, go to her [website](#).

Mondays with Masters

Vocalist Kelley Suttentfield

Bass-Matt Aronoff

Masters: Joe Carbone 9/19,

Tony Romano 9/26, Vic Juris 10/3, Howard Alden 10/10

The Metropolitan Room
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