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Krall charms Sonoma

Rain fails to dampen jazzfest spirits

Neal Ross Sonoma Valley Sun

Diana Krall may have bronchitis – but that didn't stop her from showing last night's Sonoma Jazz+ crowd at the Field of Dreams why she is, in the words of one festival-goer, "the voice of modern jazz."

If anything, the 41-year-old Canadian's signature vocals were even smokier than usual. And when she explained why, after opening with the respectively hot and cool "Let's Fall in Love" and "The Look of Love," one concerned female fan called out to her to "stop talking."

"Is it like nails on a chalkboard, or so sexy you can't stand it?" she asked with a playful smile.

The answer was obvious to the main tent's near-capacity crowd, who punctuated with wild applause a 90-minute set of eleven songs including "I'll String Along With You," "Frim Fram Sauce" and "I've Got You Under My Skin."

Krall's condition didn't affect her piano playing, and she was assisted for most of the set by guitarist Anthony Wilson, bassist John Clayton and drummer Jeff Hamilton – each of whom shone together and in occasional solos. Krall took her own piano solo with a scorching rendition of Joni Mitchell's "A Case of You." Between songs, she entertained the audience with tales of her twin baby boys, whose "real affection for music" may or may not be inspiring a new album.

"They should learn children's songs before they go to preschool and start singing 'Ten Cents A Dance' ... the sultry cool sounds of 'Wheels On The Bus,'" she quipped.

Krall's quartet wasn't the only stellar musical offering last night. Opening for Krall was pianist Taylor Eigsti's quartet, who took a smooth seventy-five-minute instrumental tour through a handful of classic and modern pieces including two seamless duets with guitarist Julian Lage. Their set ended with a version of Duke Ellington's "Caravan" that evoked a desert dream of sleeping sphinxes.

During the 75-minute dinner intermission, Trombone Shorty & Orleans Avenue kept the bandshell audience's feet flying and hips shaking with a relentless mix of blues and soul, including a wake-the-dead version of "St. James Infirmary."

But Krall was the centerpiece of the evening. She closed her set at 10:25 p.m. with the Peggy Lee standard "I Don't Know Enough About You." People began streaming from the tent, then climbed over chairs to take their seats when Krall and her boys returned for an encore with "Gee Baby, Ain't I Good To You?"

Judging by the standing ovation, the answer was "yes."

Sonoma Jazz+ concludes tonight with Al Jarreau, Roy Rogers and Bonnie Raitt.