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## Hanover's Amanda Carr lights up sold out house at Scullers

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In these days of auto-tuned pop hits, monotone hip-hop, and reality-tv creating stars with the staying power of day-old donuts, it is surely refreshing to hear a singer putting heart and soul into every note, and taking the kind of creative chances that make for genuine excitement on stage.

Hanover's Amanda Carr played to a packed house at Scullers Jazz Club in Boston on Thursday, Nov. 20, 2014.

Of course it also helps immensely if that vocalist actually has the pipes to pull it off, and Hanover's Amanda Carr certainly proved that last night before a sold out crowd of about 200 fans at Scullers Jazz Club in Boston. Carr was backed by the Ken Clark Organ Trio, and saxophone queen Myanna.

If many of Carr's songs would fall into the category of Jazz Standards, the way she delivered them certainly did not. Let's face it, most of us have heard these tunes done to death, and every singer tries, with varying success, to give them their own twist. Carr injects the most familiar jazz tunes with her own effervescent approach, always dynamic and unique, and often pushing the tempo into uncharted realms. You can speculate that it might represent her inner rock singer coming out, but the bottom line is that her vocal arrangements are capable of stunning effects.

Clark supplied the bass lines on his Hammond B-3. Mike Mele's hollow-body electric guitar produced a delectable tone, and Steve Chaggarris on drums kept things going with frequently humorous fills. Myanna, naturally, was a force of nature on alto, tenor, and baritone sax, adding layers of grit and soul to every song she played on.

Carr began with a buoyant run through Dizzy Gillespie's "Night in Tunisia," and if those lyrics are not often heard, she made the tune a sultry vision of exotic places. The blues classic "Hallelujah, I Love (Him) So" gave Carr the chance to show her blues chops, but she also expanded the tune into a scat-singing coda worthy of Ella Fitzgerald.

The slow and smoky ballad "Don't Go to Strangers" was one of the night's highlights, showcasing Carr's range and control, but more than that, her command of emotional nuance. It's fine if you have a great voice and can do gymnastics with it, but if it doesn't move people, it's worth nothing. Carr, thankfully, never loses sight of that, and her long vocal slide on the final line, "come home to me.." was worth the price of admission.

A rockin' romp through Steely Dan's "Boddisatva" had Carr on a KX-5 portable keyboard she got from Thomas Dolby. Later on Carr tackled 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow,' and turned that old chestnut into finger-popping swing, having all kinds of fun with her phrasing. Both Mele and Myanna played around with the tempo on their incendiary solos, and after a fast initial statement, Clark brought it all home with darkly funky block chords.

During the middle of the 90-minute set, the band was featured, with Myanna wowing the crowd with her alto sax inferno "Smoky," where she strolled through the tables while playing sizzling r&b, and also with her baritone sax epic, "Intrepidation." Clark stood out with his tribute to Jimmy Smith, "Goodbye Mr. Smith," a suitably propulsive soul-funk composition with a killer groove.

But the night belonged to Carr, and whether it was her lively run through "Mais Que Nada," from Sergio Mendes and Brasil '66, or her closing number, a rapid-fire shuffle transforming the old "What A Difference A Day Makes" into a modern sprint, she was galvanizing.

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