

Girl Talk - Holly Cole's New Album

by Dale Geddes

I was first approached to review the new Holly Cole album, "Girl Talk" by the promoter of the local show. The idea was to review the album well, and thus drum up support for the concert - a simple tactic for any show. Sure it's unethical in journalism terms, but I get two free passes to the show, a press kit and a copy of the tape.

I suppose I'm to ramble on aimlessly about the rave reviews that Holly Cole has received throughout the country, since nary a newspaper in this nation hasn't encouraged her in some form or another. Or I could go on about the fact that she is a hometown girl, originally spending some of her teen-age years in Fredericton. Or I could talk about the producer and musicians that helped make her album great.

But I can't do that...it would make this article about as exciting as eating chalkdust.

Instead I will legitimately tell you that the only people who should NOT attend the show are those seriously warped and depressed by heartbreak. The rest of us will enjoy the show thoroughly, while the other "lost-lovers" will be touched by her voice to the point where they will go home and consume a litre of Drano



A record review is a cynical and arrogant process where the reviewer puts himself above the artist and begins throwing complaints and compliments everywhere. With Holly Cole, she deserves most every compliment you give her.

Cole is undoubtedly a remarkable singer. Listening to the album, you dance around, sing with the songs you know and feel a strange sort of "sexual sultry" that usually only comes from the Rolling Stones or Depeche Mode. Don't mistake that comment

for her style. Cole sings, what is known as, "Torch Style", the black evening gloves and black cocktail dresses of the '20s. That style is in desperate need of some fresh blood, and Holly Cole is fully capable of kicking its dead corpse into action - as well as, if not better, than Harry Connick Jr. did with the Big Band sound.

The album itself is a collection of old, but not so well known, standards that she and the band have a good deal of fun with. Bassist David Piltch, from Mary Margret O'Hara's band, and Aaron

Davis from Manteca work their way around the tunes as they please, with Cole. The result is outstanding. It creates a music that few people can dislike, without being deemed "safe".

Admittedly, the music is quite low-key. The producer, Peter Moore - who also produced the Cowboy Junkies' "The Trinity Sessions" - taped the whole Holly Cole album with one Calrec ambisonic mike and no more than four musicians in the room at a time.

Cole slides through each of the classics like they were written for her, or at least like a woman with a passion for something, and jazz will do. Such songs as "My Foolish Heart," "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" and "How Long Has This Been Going On" melt and slide out of her contralto mouth. She even does justice to the overplayed pop 'classic' "Downtown", originally done by Petula Clark.

Many people whine and complain how Fredericton never get any really big bands to play in the city. And then if one does show up, we all buy our tickets at the last second. Or worse yet, we lament about the bands that have at one time come here and then went on to find bigger success and will never play Fredericton again. Well, at the rate she's going this could be Holly Cole's last trip to her teenage town, and it would be just short of heinous sin to miss it.

The album portrays a woman who both antediluvian hogies and adolescent punks who trash to Nitzer Ebb can enjoy. The only

prerequisite for the show would be to bring a date, lest you find yourself listening to honey-like vocals and starting to cuddle up to the armrest of your chair.

Cole has raw talent that could turn out to be just frightening when she gains even more maturity. Her voice is powerful, and she displays that fact by hitting every note with accuracy and passion. She does not favour the glissando technique of most female jazz singers, and resultingly has developed a somewhat unique style.

It is possible, finally, to shun Cole's tremendous potential as nothing more than local hype, or worse still, note that she is Canadian and thus not capable of making music worth seeing in town. Hogwash!! Let the pious-swine who tell you that great music can't be made here sit alone in their rooms waving American and British flags ... we'll enjoy the rest of the good music ourselves.

Cole does favour Canadian dates when they are economically possible, but at the same time she could control even the sleaziest jazz-joints in London, seduce Wayne Newton in Vegas with her voice and make Etta James openly weep in New York's now defunct Birdland. Not bad for a 26 year-old Canuck.

Finally, Cole admits to being the "World's number one Habs fan." Montreal doesn't play this Sunday night but Holly Cole does. With rush seating and curtain time at 8:30 p.m. at the Playhouse, I'll see you there early.

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