



'Blues in the Night' delivers sassy performances

Black Repertory Theatre of KC/GEM Theatre



Imaging stepping back into a Blues and Jazz club reminiscent of the 1930's, and think about the great artists that built their fame performing in cabarets of that era.

"Blues in the Night," the current production of The Black Rep of Kansas City, transports audiences back to that era . The show entertains with classic Blues music with super-talented vocalists and a five-piece band. Make no mistake, this show's unique concept sweeps the audience away in non-stop fashion.

Do not expect any dialogue. The show rolls though song after song with repeated choruses to fit the piece together. It's like a Blues and Jazz version of operetta—no dialogue, just

song. And, the audience feels like they sit in a Harlem Jazz club of days past.



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This show makes you smile and feel good. Each act goes fast and non-stop with only a few songs that audiences will know. Still, the music and lyrics are fun and the performances are smooth as silk. All ages will enjoy this show.

Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, Billy Eckstine, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Dinah Washington, Della Reese, Duke Ellington set the tone and paved the way for such other greats as Aretha Franklin, Michael Jackson, Janis Joplin, and so many more.

Blues music in the show sounds like a hybrid blending of Blues and Jazz. The songs and lyrics pull patrons into the music and the performances by the vocalists gives depth and texture to each tune. The singing features some husky, throaty delivery and almost blends into the 'scat' famous by Ella Fitzgerald. A person more familiar with Blues and Jazz styles could better describe the vocal delivery.



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Significant about the Blues, pain, heartache, hopefulness, sex, love, and revenge all figure into the music. "My momma done tol' me, when I was in pigtailed..." goes on to tell the characteristics of a no-count, worrisome thing to lead you to sing the blues in the night" as stated in Johnny Mercer's famous song, "Blues in the Night." Most songs follow the similar pattern of a someone lamenting a broken promise. Pain in the lyrics and voice provide the individualized texture to each performance.

Along with the four great vocal performers, the five-piece band was equally important in delivering "Blues in the Night." As they played, the bass violin and drums stood out the most. Those set the rhythm and beat for the melodies. Great work by all the band in not over-playing and allowing the lyrics and vocals lead.



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The “Blues in the Night” cast is: Michael Rene as The Man, T’ionne Allen as The Lady, Paulette Dawn as The Woman, and Jessica Michael as The Girl.

The band is: Audrey Lena Jester, piano; Gerald Turner, reeds; Josh Williams, trumpet; Ry Kincaid, bass; Morgan Rogers, drums; Charles Pridgen, rehearsal pianist.

The artistic staff is Damron Russel Armstrong, director; Megan Greenlee, assistant director; Zachary Hampton, stage manager; Jeff Eubanks, lights; Art Kent, sound.

“Blues in the Night” runs Sept. 27-Oct. 13 at the famous GEM Theatre in the Kansas City Jazz District just east of 18th and Paseo. Tickets are available through [The Black Rep of Kansas City website.](#)

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