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Review: FLYING HIGH Celebrates Female Vocalists at Birdland

Honoring the great female jazz singers of the 40s and 50s through song

By: Rebecca Kaplan Mar. 15, 2024

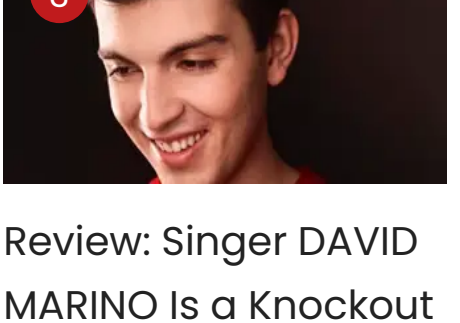
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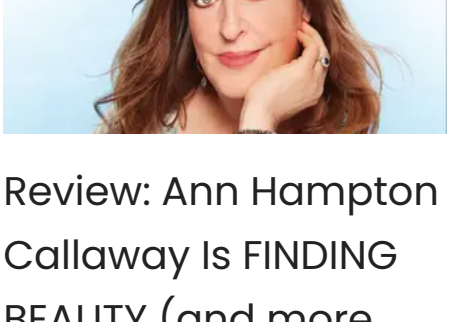
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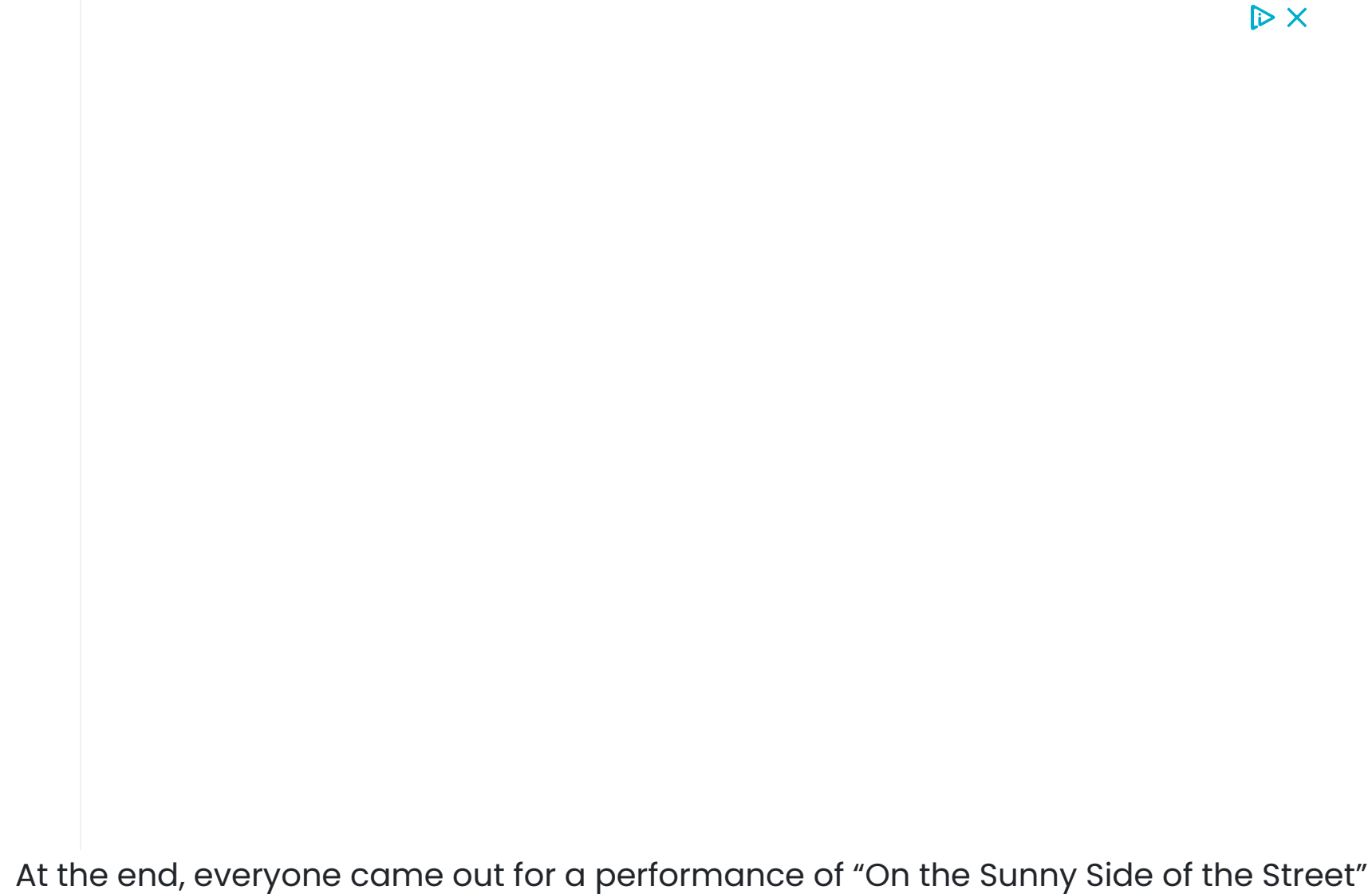
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FLYING HIGH kicked off women's history month with a jazzy bang, honoring the great female jazz singers of the 40s and 50s at Birdland on March 9. They were paying tribute to female singers who worked with the classic "big bands" (Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, et cetera). Those women included the likes of Rosemary Clooney, Doris Day, Billie Holiday, and many others who made their own name. Champion Fulton took the helm of the night, playing piano and serving as emcee in addition to singing beautifully. In one of her opening bits, she explained that these women, remembered today as great solo artists, each got their start traveling around as the sole female member of an otherwise all-male band. "Not so different from today," Fulton added, with a meaningful look at her three male bandmates – Nicholas Payton on trumpet, Willie Jones III on drums, and Neal Miner on bass.

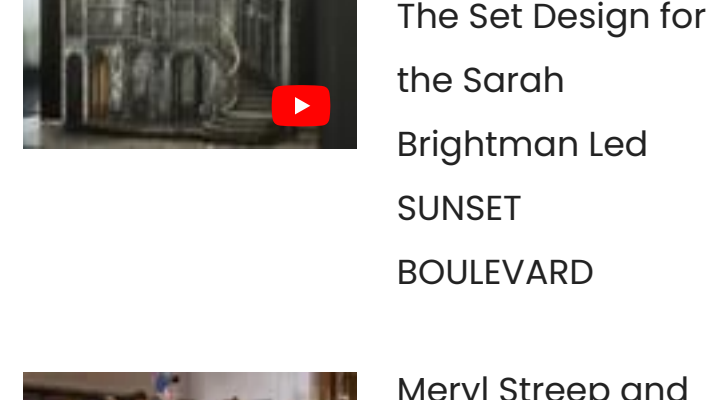
The night opened with an instrumental version of "Tea for Two," "Tangerine," and "You Go to My Head," played by the band, including Fulton. The entire evening was a glorious celebration of female vocal talent, with singing by Champion Fulton, Jane Monheit and Lezlie Harrison, each of whom soared in their own way. There were too many lovely moments to count: some of my personal favorites were Fulton on a silky rendition of "I've Heard That Song Before" (music by Jule Styne; lyrics Sammy Cahn), originally sung by Helen Forrest, which opened with a solo by Neal Miner on bass. The entire band was in sync, so in tune with each other and the singers. Lezlie Harrison displayed masterful command of rhythm on "The One I Love Belongs to Someone Else," originally sung by Doris Day. Jane Monheit sang a stunning version of Jo Stafford's "You Belong to Me," with beautiful vibrato. With distinctive voices and excellent vocal control, each singer was a treat to watch throughout the night, unique in their own way but alike in pure, raw talent. Each of the band members got a chance to shine as well, with the band alternating solos on different numbers. They twisted classics into fresh numbers, making the night feel nostalgic and new all at once.



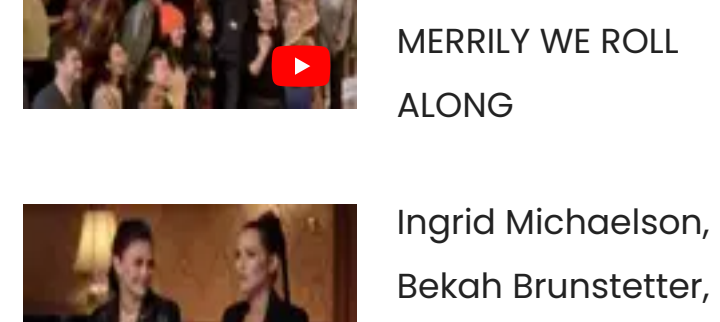
At the end, everyone came out for a performance of "On the Sunny Side of the Street" (music by Jimmy McHugh; lyrics by Dorothy Fields). It was clear they were having a blast, and what a perfect upbeat, optimistic number to end a perfect night out at Birdland Jazz Club.

The evening of song was based around an album produced by Jazz at the Ballroom (for more information on the album, and more tour dates for FLYING HIGH, visit the website here).

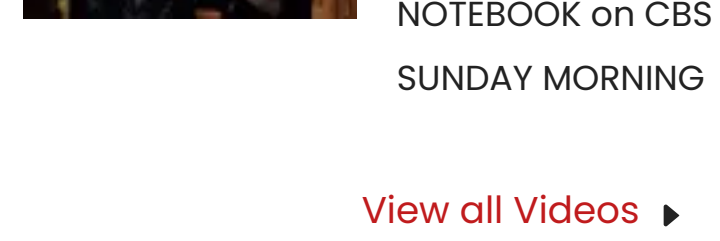
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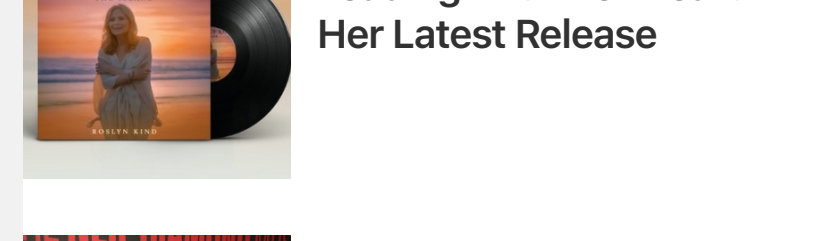
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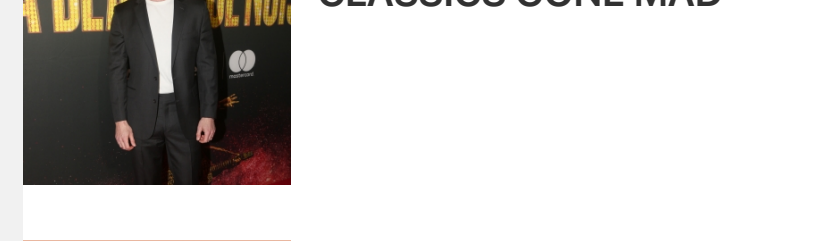
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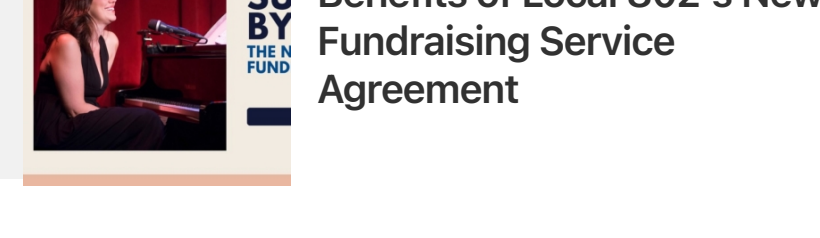
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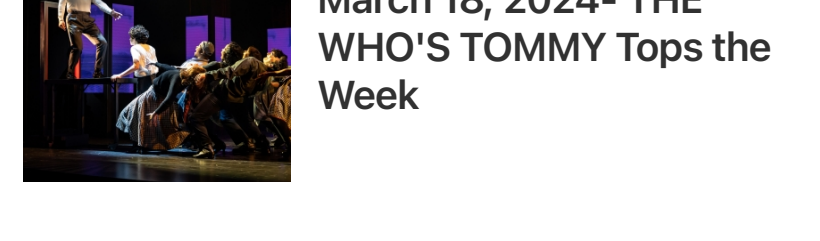
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2 Interview: Linda Purl Teases BIG BAND ROMANCE at Birdland

Linda Purl has had a long, storied career, playing iconic roles on Happy Days, Matlock and The Office. On Monday April 1, she's back at Birdland Jazz Club with a one-night only concert called BIG BAND ROMANCE. The show will pay tribute to the big band greats with hit songs including "Pick Yourself Up" and "Come Rain or Come Shine."

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4 ZODIAC SIGNS: BROADWAY EDITION Announced At 54 Below!

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FROM THIS AUTHOR - REBECCA KAPLAN

Rebecca Kaplan is a writer and standup comedian living in New York. You can follow her on Twitter and Instagram @rebeccakaplan and find more of her upcoming shows and projects at ... (read more about this author)

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