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A COLUMN BY JAMES GRANT

## Mood relaxed as Diana Krall plays Fort Wayne's Embassy Theatre Concert stirs up nostalgia for 1920s and vaudeville era.

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The mood Tuesday night was relaxed, reflective and most definitely musical as Diana Krall and her five-piece band performed a stellar show at Embassy Theatre to an ecstatic and appreciative crowd.

The audience was clearly in Krall's corner from the moment she walked out on the stage until they gave her a standing ovation after her last encore.

Throughout a 17-song set, Krall and her band — Anthony Wilson (guitar), Dennis Crouch (bass), Stuart Duncan (fiddle), Karriem Riggins (drums) and Patrick Warren (keyboards) — expertly maneuvered their way through a wide selection of moods and styles.

From the moment Krall sat down behind her black Steinway piano, the night was filled with an atmosphere of nostalgia.

The backdrop as Krall and her band took the stage was that of a dial from a 1920s or '30s radio evoking the atmosphere of a bygone era.

Several strategically placed vintage radios of different shapes and sizes onstage as well as lighting above the stage that looked like vintage microphones added to that nostalgic feeling along with silent-era film footage that was projected behind the stage.

During the middle of the first song, "We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye," Krall called the evening vaudeville theater. Quite appropriate as the Embassy was built during the vaudevillian era and Krall gave some vaudeville era songs her silky touch, making them come alive in a most vivid and contemporaneous way.

"I love this theater, Embassy Theatre," Krall said after her second song, "Sweet Man." "I love playing here."

Clearly Krall is a fan of history, as she herself said onstage, and her appreciation of the Embassy and the era in which it was built was apparent when she spoke of her aunt, who was a vaudevillian dancer in the 1920s and might also have played the Embassy stage.

Krall also spoke of her love of Fort Wayne's own Carole Lombard, one of her favorite actresses, during her first encore song, "Boulevard of Broken Dreams," when she jokingly chided the audience to make sure they knew Carole was born here.

The sense that Krall was familiar with Fort Wayne and her references to the city and Embassy Theatre throughout the night was a much appreciated touch of class.

Krall also seemed at ease and clearly had a strong connection and rapport with her band. She clapped along with the audience in approval when band members took some amazing turns at instrumental solos during the show.

Though Krall did seem to be a little nervous at times talking to the audience, she relayed a sly sense of humor and a graciousness in her stage banter that gave the evening a much more intimate tone that seemed to resonate well with the audience.

As funny as Krall was at times, she mainly let her music do the speaking for her.

Highlights for me included her versions of "Sunny Side of the Street"; "Let it Rain"; her funky version of Tom Waits' "Temptation"; her smoky, alone-in-the-bar-at-2 a.m. reading of "I've Got You Under My Skin," which segued perfectly into Joni Mitchell's equally smoky "A Case of You"; and her lovely versions of "California Dreamin'" and "Deed I Do."

Krall's reference to hearing "Let it Rain" on an old 78 record made me smile as I admire her love of records and her ability to make those older songs seem alive and timeless allowing new generations to rediscover them.

While Krall joked about the night being a really uplifting evening due to her somewhat somber approach to music at times, it's her ability to bring a melancholy feeling to her interpretations of others' music that I call a joyous exploration of the soul.

I think her strong point is being able to explore the human condition through her impassioned vocals and immaculate playing and intimate arrangements, which sort of holds a candle to the darker aspects of human nature that to me, and I'm sure to others, brings an honesty to her performances that's refreshing.



### More Information

The set

Concert set list for Tuesday night's show:

- "We Just Couldn't Say Goodbye"
  - "Sweet Man"
  - "Just Like A Butterfly"
  - "Sunny Side Of The Street"
  - "Let It Rain"
  - "Temptation"
- Solo Section
- "I've Got You Under My Skin"
  - "A Case Of You"
  - "Glad Rag Doll"
  - "Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter"
  - "California Dreamin'"
  - "Operator"
  - "Just You, Just Me"
  - "Deed I Do"

Encores

- "Boulevard Of Broken Dreams"
- "Wallflower"
- "A Little Mixed Up"

Also refreshing was the sound: clear, clean and just the right volume.

It was so wonderful to be able to enjoy an evening of music without feeling like you had to reach for a pair of earplugs to keep your ears from bleeding.

Dr. James Ator and his wife, Irene, both Fort Wayne residents and longtime Krall fans, also thought Krall was in great form.

“She was dazzling,” James Ator said of Krall's performance. “What she demonstrated was all the jazz piano styles.”

“She was able to sing so many different genres, she was unbelievable and her guitarist was also phenomenal.”

Irene Ator agreed and said they had seen Krall perform years ago before she was famous and that she was just as good now as when they first discovered her music.

Krall's talent as a musician and performer were indeed on full display, making her performance one of the more memorable evenings of music I've ever had the pleasure of enjoying.