



LIVE REVIEW– ROCHESTER INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL 2009

By Ron Netsky
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British singer **Tessa Souter** is one of my favorite vocalists, but I was a bit concerned that the heavy rain and competition from jazz titan Dave Brubeck might make for a sparse crowd at Christ Church Wednesday

night. So, on my way into the late show, I asked the door person about attendance at the first show. She said it was sold out and that many people stood in the rain, hoping to get in.

"Great," I said.

"It was really raining hard," she said, with a concerned look on her face. I explained that I was a sadist and went in.

To say that Souter enchanted the audience would be an understatement. At most of the Club Pass concerts I've been to, dozens of people leave before the end so they can make it to the next show. With 10 p.m. approaching (starting time for four venues) only a few people in the capacity crowd left.

Everyone else seemed to be transfixed by Souter's gorgeous voice and wonderful personality. Her set included standards like "I'm Glad There Is You," several Brazilian tunes, and the haunting Nick Drake ballad, "River Man." But there were two songs that stood out.

Souter's own "You Don't Have To Believe," with its Middle Eastern feel, its philosophical lyrics, and its chant-like vocal, drew perhaps the largest ovation of the concert. And there was another -- - unplanned --- tune that was equally riveting.

Saying she thought it would be appropriate to perform in this setting (an incredibly beautiful church), Souter began "The Creator Has A Master Plan" by having the audience sing a background chant. The tune by Pharoah Sanders (with words by Leon Thomas) came out of the same 1960's mysticism as John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme." You don't have to be religious (that would be me) to appreciate it.

Only the confident in the audience sang, which turned out to be perfect. They stayed in the background as Souter's voice soared over them with ethereal majesty. It was a great performance.