



TESSA SOUTER – AN ECLECTIC MIX OF JAZZ



LIVE REVIEW

By Charlene Gianetti
on Playing Around
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Jazz lovers in New York are blessed with many places to enjoy wonderful music in beautiful settings. Every now and then, however, someone comes along who is

refreshingly different and raises the bar for every other jazz singer. Tessa Souter is that performer. Her recent show at Joe's Pub was an eclectic mix of old standards, new sounds, and familiar ballads given an unusual twist. Even her backup band—an electrified acoustic guitar, bass, drums, and accordion—seemed to make a statement that this was not the run of the mill cabaret act. And Joe's Pub was the perfect place for Souter's show. The large room somehow seemed intimate, and her audience was a cross section of young and old.

Souter was born in London of Trinidadian and English parents. Her speaking voice has an appealing English lilt and her stories about growing up and living to sing made for interesting patter between her songs. But, of course, her fans came to hear her sing, and no one left disappointed. Many of her selections were from *Obsession*, her third album, following *Listen Love* (2005) and *Nights of Key Largo* (2008).

Souter is an imposing presence on stage, tall with exotic beauty, she wore a Grecian style gold lame dress that left one shoulder bare. Her dark hair was pulled up into a tight knot and long gold earrings dangled from her ears. Her arrangements allowed plenty of time for her backup musicians to strut their stuff, a bonus for the audience. These are skilled musicians and the musical interludes added rather than detracted from Souter's act.

She opened with "Afro Blue," displaying her Caribbean roots with this rhythmic number, including solos on guitar and drum. Souter confessed her admiration for fellow singer Tierney Sutton, known for her skill at deconstructing a song and making it her own. Souter performed a similar trick with "Eleanor Rigby," the Beatles song, and with "Send in the Clowns," from *A Little Night Music*, now playing on Broadway.

Souter keeps a busy performing schedule traveling from London to Moscow and to various spots in the U.S. Her shows inevitably sell out, a warning to visit her website often not to be left out in the cold.