

# Marcovicci goes clubbing at Feinstein's

Music review by Robert Lee Hall

Andrea Marcovicci is a cabaret phenomenon. She revels in its purest configuration – one person center stage before a small audience. There is no one who can match her in vividness, in wit, in glamour, in drama.

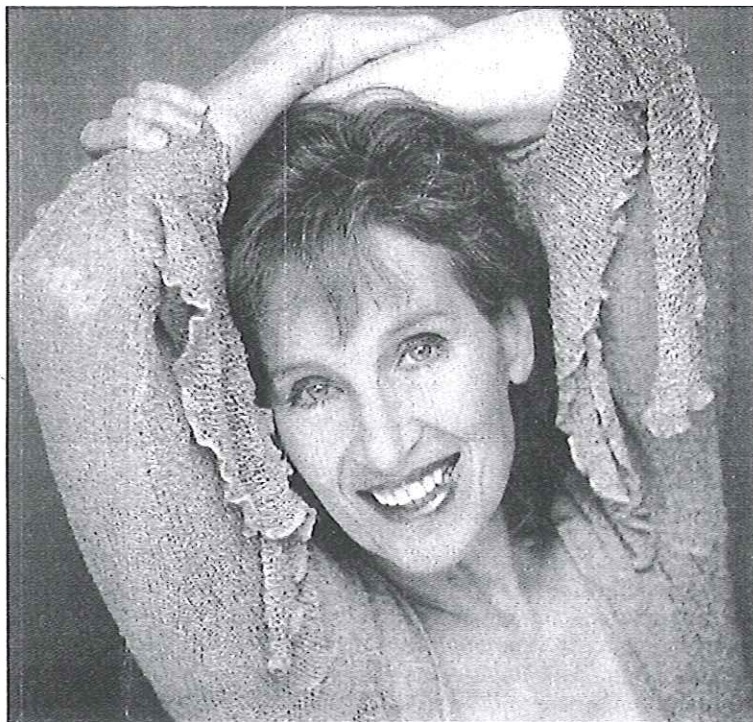
I'm not saying she's the most fine-voiced of the form's practitioners, but the sum total of the woman called "The Queen of Cabaret" pretty much blows her competition away. When she strides onstage wearing that big smile, you know you're in the hands of a woman who knows just what she's doing, and she does that supremely well.

What is "that"? Exploring the history and content of the Great American Songbook. Any Marcovicci show, whether on a subject like World War II or on a particular artist, like Frank Loesser or Kurt Weill, is a little bit of a lecture (she defines cabaret as "more-than-you-need-to-know entertainment"). But she's never off-putting, never Professor Marcovicci.

She puts American music in context in order to deepen its meaning. From whom else will you learn that there are two versions of the classic, "Look at Me Now," and hear both: the one Frank Sinatra sang with the Dorsey band in 1941 and the more cynical version, extolling loot over love, that Lee Wiley sang in the 1950s?

Only from Andrea.

I learned about "Look at Me Now" from Marcovicci's latest well-tooled compilation at Feinstein's at the Nikko last week. Her theme this time around was



Vocalist Andrea Marcovicci helped liven San Francisco's night scene with a recent performance at Feinstein's in the Nikko Hotel.

the nightclub era of the 1940s and 50s when, as she put it "every hotel had a dance band." It was the heyday of the likes of Mabel Mercer and Bobby Short, and Sinatra and Lee Wiley, too. Marcovicci has a special affinity for the era, because her Mom and Dad were part of its nightclub scene, he a musician, she a singer.

She started her career at the tail end of it, and she describes a youthful encounter with the great Julie Wilson, she of the gardenia in her hair. Glimpsing Marcovicci in the wings watching her rehearse, Wilson drawled, "Don't be in a rush. The old broad isn't

done yet."

Marcovicci smiled around Feinstein's as she told the anecdote. "And now I'm the old broad," she said.

Not so old, and still going strong, with the help of long-time musical director and pianist, Shelley Markham, and classy bassist, Daniel Fabricant.

Wearing a long, silvery dress enhanced by several elegant changes of top, she initiated her ode to nightclubs by raising a champagne glass in tribute to its glories. She set out with a lush

# Andrea

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"Moonlight Cocktail," followed by tributes to Billie Holliday, Kaye Ballard, Comden and Green and the incomparable Hildegard, along with reminiscences of the great clubs of the past: the Persian Room, the Stork Club and our own Venetian Room, where I have my own fond memories of Tony Bennett and Ella Fitzgerald.

There were classic songs: "Dance with Me," "and "You Go to My Head," as well as deserving lesser-known compositions that were a pleasure to hear: "All in Fun," "Don't Look at me That Way," and some funny songs from the era of the great funny ladies: Charlotte Rae, Imogen Coca, Dorothy Loudon.

Marcovicci's instrument has changed. She's developed a vibrato that diminishes the strong, bright clarity of the voice she used to deploy. That hardly matters. She's always been more than a singer. She's an actor (it helps to remember that she starred in A.C.T.'s *Saint Joan*, as well as in many movies and TV shows), and her great strength is her ability to *perform* songs, not just sing them.

In her current outing, she gives every moment just the right comic or dramatic edge.

Upcoming Feinstein's artists include Barbara Cook, Faith Prince, Emily Bergl, Christine Andreas, Donna McKechnie, Andrea Marcovicci, Christine Ebersole, Tommy Tune. For tickets and information call 866-663-1063 or visit [www.ticketweb.com](http://www.ticketweb.com).

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