

Brazil' Bebel Gilberto: A Command Performance

Contributed by Ernest Barteldes
Saturday, 20 November 2004

Last August Bebel Gilberto was supposed to have débuted her new tour in New York, but strong rains that night made the open-air concert impossible to happen - so it was no surprise that her performance at Town Hall last Wednesday, November 17, had a huge turnout - the venue (where Rita Lee played a few months ago) was completely sold-out.

Bebel entered the stage at 9:00 PM backed by a highly competent five-piece band that included guitarists Pedro Baby (the son of Pepeu Gomes and Baby Consuelo), Masa Shimizu (who also played bass) and others.

The opening song, "Simplesmente" (Simply), which she co-wrote with Didi Gutman and producer Marius de Vries drew enthusiastic applaud from the crowd.

The first half of the show was dominated by songs from her new album, Bebel Gilberto, which she delivered confidently as (initially) the band stuck mostly to the arrangements on the CD.

I specially liked "Baby", a Caetano Veloso song in an English version by 70s psych-rock band Os Mutantes.

Other highlights included "All Around" (co-written by Bebel, Shimizu and Marius de Vries), the soft-samba "River Song" and the very danceable Carlinhos Brown composition "Aganju"

In a very quiet but intimate moment of the show, she sat down to perform "Mais Feliz", an early composition of hers that was a huge hit in Brazil for Adriana Calcanhoto in the early 90s, which she remade herself on 2000's Tanto Tempo. She was accompanied solely by Shimizu on acoustic guitar.

Another beautifully quiet moment was "Every Day You've Been Away", a Pedro Baby/Daniel Jobim bossa nova in which the song's co-writer played a very soft acoustic guitar to Gilberto's even softer voice.

Fans of Gilberto's first album weren't forgotten as she performed a souped-up arrangement to "Tanto Tempo."

Classic bossa nova fans were presented with "So Nice", a song from Tanto Tempo that was also a hit for Astrud Gilberto (her father's first wife, no direct relation with Bebel) in the 60s, and also "Samba da Benção", a Jobim/Vinicius de Moraes collaboration.

Uncle Chico Buarque was not forgotten either, and her bare-bones rendition of "Samba e Amor" drew chills up my spine, and judging by the response of everyone else, they felt the same as I did.

The last part of the show was reserved to more upbeat moments. The song "Bananeira" received a more dance treatment (the same thing happened with Tanto Tempo), and the lounge samba "Close Your Eyes" was a suitable finale for an awesome concert.

I have admired Bebel Gilberto ever since her appearance on the Red, Hot & Rio album (1996), and having seen her live for the first time, I feel that she is bound to be just as much a musical legend as her father is - but in no way she will be overshadowed by the past .

Bebel Gilberto shines in her own light.

Bebel Gilberto

Town Hall, NYC
November 17, 2004

Ernest Barteldes is an ESL and Portuguese teacher. In addition to that, he is a freelance writer who has regularly been contributing to The Greenwich Village Gazette since September 1999. His work has also been published by Brazzil, The Staten Island Advance, The Staten Island Register, The SI Muse, The Villager, GLSSite and other publications. He lives in Staten Island, NY. He can be reached at ebarteldes@yahoo.com.