

Robin McKelle: Modern Antique

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Ashante Infantry



(out of 4)



On her smashing 2006 debut, this Boston-based chanteuse displayed elegance, musicality and interpretive powers that recalled greats like Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan.

She continues in that vein here with American Songbook gems such as "Day By Day" and "Lullaby of Birdland"; but instead of playing it safe stretches with unexpected delights like a scat-infused version of Steve Miller's "Abracadabra" and soul-filled takes on "Make Someone Happy" and "Lover Man."

Going note-to-note with a killing no-name big band, McKelle combines Ann Hampton Callaway's moxie with Anita O'Day's sultriness.

People who lapped up the '40s bent of her first disc may not appreciate the R&B twists or the self-penned pop ballad "Stop This World," but McKelle is a substantial talent. Embraced by French audiences, she's long overdue for a Toronto show.

Top Track: You hear the desperation with which McKelle yearns to be romanced on a bluesy, spine-tingling "I Want To Be Loved."