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Tin Angel

November 2008

Homecoming. The word evokes a wave of nostalgia riding in on a crisp autumn breeze, the aroma of burning wood and Thanksgiving turkey, cozy gatherings and celebrations filled with familiar faces and warm embraces. Put the worries on the back burner and join the party. Yes, it was homecoming at the **Tin Angel** and we all rallied around our local hero to celebrate him home from his recent east coast tour.

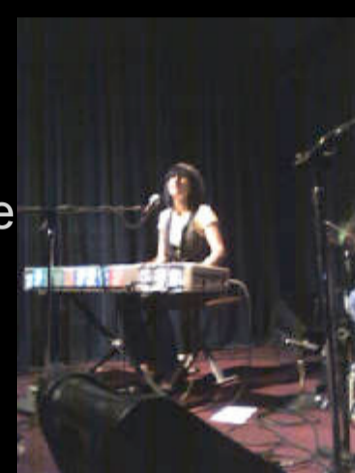
The room was packed with old friends and new. All tables were reserved and as latecomers scrambled to claim a stool close to the stage, I settled into my favorite spot and sipped a glass wine, eagerly anticipating the first strum of the guitar.

The pre-show music selection was carefully chosen from a milk crate stacked high with familiar albums from the world of pop; post-Beatles, pre-Britney. Hall and Oates, Lou Rawls and Dire Straits crooned and wailed as I did some catching up with my JG family.

The lights dimmed...showtime!

Clara Lofaro stepped up and parked herself behind a stretch limo of a keyboard. Starting the set with *Waterfall*, a tune from her new cd, *Perfekt world*, this Toronto-born dynamo proved to us once again that good things come in small packages. Petite and charming, Clara burst into bloom before our eyes like a desert flower after the rain; fresh, bold and vivacious.

Backed by wunderkind Jamie on bass, percussion (including my new favorite – the cajon) and vocals, Clara skillfully, mastered an impressive vocal range, her style a sumptuous soup of familiar flavors, reminiscent of Barbara Streisand, Sheryl Crow and Bonnie Raitt, with a few secret ingredients that are hers alone. Equally at ease with all genres, Clara can belt it out or take it down to a whisper, altering the tempo as effortlessly as the wind changes direction. She takes us on a journey of sound; down through the depths, earthy, sultry and soulful one moment, and in the next we're sailing through the clouds.



After her set we chatted a bit and she signed my cd. What more can I say – I'm a fan! Check her out at <http://www.claralofaro.com/>

With the crowd nicely warmed up, Jeffrey arrived on the scene, sporting a red and black bandana over his gravity-defying rocker hair. Love it! He brought a doctor's bag filled with an assortment of onstage necessities, an energy drink, a leopard print hankie for the sweat...the rest is a mystery but I'm willing to bet there's a pack of Big Red or Hubba Bubba somewhere in there.

Jeff opened with *Happy That* and much to my great surprise and delight, followed with the obscure, but beautiful, *Make Him Believe* from *More Galore*, which I had never heard him play live before. (Thanks Jeff!) Give it a listen sometime.



As it turns out, this show was full of surprises. The hubby was excited to hear one of his often requested but seldom (if ever) played tunes, *Wish it Away*, but halfway through Jeff lost focus and gave it up claiming "some things are best left on the record." In his defense, it is a very long, very intense song. Later, he totally channeled Bowie when he sang *Heroes*. At one point if you closed your eyes you'd swear it was David Jones himself up there.

His banter covered a wide range of topics, from family issues to his recent tour with Shawn Colvin. Jeff ended with the quintessential rock anthem, *Hero in Me* and this time I wasn't the only one singing along.

We were treated to another **Clara Lofaro** set. I had spent the whole first show trying to place why her voice sounded so familiar. Turns out she's the voice singing *When You Wish Upon a Star* in the Disney commercial – you know the one where they say "You just won the superbowl, what are you going to do next?" You can catch her in her hometown –NYC. The last song she played was sweet and sad, filled with passion and longing. I was so absorbed by it that I completely forgot to take note of the title. I'm sure I will get to see her play again someday, maybe opening for Jeff in New York, where she has a large following.

Jeffrey returned to the stage in a totally different frame of mind. Whereas in the first set he seemed a little antsy, restless, unclear of which direction to take, this new Jeffrey was focused, synthesizing all of his energy like a Zen master and pouring it all into his guitar and vocals. Starting with *You Believe in Me* he progressed, without a word, to *All of the Will in the World*.

On the next song, *Nursery Rhyme*, Jeff invited our very cute and talented young friend Jamie to sit in. Jeff seemed energized by the beat. I was hoping he would join him again later in the set but the show took a different turn. During *Praise or Blame* Jeff blew out an amp or something and was forced to go low-tech with true acoustic. I love how he is able to just go with the flow, using problems as tools for creative expression. He immediately toned it down and played all the profound, soul-searching songs; digging deep and pulling up raw emotion, crafting each song as though it were the first time he was performing it. He revisited *Wish It Away* and this time pulled it off with perfection, even better than the record. It was so essentially human, ferociously passionate and thoroughly transcendental. Amazing. That was the highlight of the night, the week, the season and an early Christmas present for me.

Happy Holidays everyone!

-Liz