

Collins keeps fans at Harrah's swaying in their seats

By Kathryn Reed



STATELINE – It was 1975 when Judy Collins won a Grammy for Song of the Year for “Send in the Clowns” the one song I knew she sang before I saw her in concert Saturday night.

What a shame that I thought this 70-year-old singer-songwriter was all about this one song. In fact, it turned out to be my least favorite song of the night.

Saturday night was like being introduced to someone for the first time, despite hearing her on CDs many a time at my parents. This night I listened with interest.

Collins dazzled the appreciative crowd at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe South Shore Room with lyrics and music of a bygone era. So much of what is on the airwaves today is noise. Collins belted out song after song with lyrics both audible and memorable “stories in words, with a richness coming from the guitar and piano she played so eloquently.

Much of the evening she was accompanied on piano by music director Russell Walden. Collins spent most of the night strumming her Martin, tuning it along the way “just like Eric Clapton.

Her vocal range is what it was years ago “hitting every

note as though it was 1961 when she released her first album.

Walking onto the stage in a glittery black pantsuit, Collins began the 90-minute show with "Both Sides Now" the Joni Mitchell classic that is part of the Grammy Hall of Fame.

The longevity of her career has allowed Collins to be associated with legends in the music industry. Before singing Harry Chapin's "Cat's in the Hat" she said, "Harry is up there looking for a rhyme for indictment." To this, the audience applauded.

This folk artist clearly has a strong following. As a contemporary and friend of Joan Baez, she taps into that style of musicianship that embraces artistry and simplicity.

Collins' easy manner on stage makes you feel like her friend by the time the night is over. She talks about the songs, the artists who may have first sang the song, the songwriters, life, getting older " and she continuously welcomes the audience to sing with her.

It was 1979 when Collins made her debut in the South Shore Room. She played 11 consecutive nights, two shows a night.

She talked about the beautiful home on Lake Tahoe that Bill Harrah owned and where all she did was sleep because of the schedule she had.

Collins capped the night with her renowned rendition of "Amazing Grace" in a cappella. It brought about the second standing ovation of the night " with the crowd clapping in hopes she'd return to the stage one more time.