

# Norah Jones serenades Harveys with range of tunes

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – From the moment she walked onto the stage filled with suspended seagulls and began her concert wearing cowboy boots and a bright, strapless dress, it became clear that Norah Jones would not be pigeonholed as an artist.

The singer, musician – who entertained a crowd of more than 4,000 Sunday night at the Harveys outdoor arena for the Lake Tahoe Summer Concert Series – allowed many songs off her new album “Little Broken Hearts” to dominate the performance.

She launched the concert with a slow, haunting “She’s 22,” which asks the listener: “Does she make you happy,” when she’s “so blue?” The mood set the stage for the rest of the evening, providing a moody haze that graced the Tahoe sky with a glorious sunset.



Norah Jones delivers a variety of music to fans Aug. 12 at Harveys. Photo/Jim Grant/Harveys-Harrah's

Mother Nature cooperated. And the crowd of wine-toting baby boomers politely accepted the musical journey Jones took them on.

But admittedly, the tunes she won five Grammy awards for and sold more than 25 million copies of spun the audience's biggest applause. It was as though the fans remained hungry for those sultry, jazzy numbers from a decade ago off the "Come Away With Me" album. The compilation made her an instant success. Her second album "Feels Like Home" brought out the 33-year-old singer's country flair, while the third "Not too Far" followed by "The Fall" began dropping Jones into a more alternative sound.

It's no wonder the award-winning singer was tagged earlier this year performing incognito in a blonde wig with punk rock band El Madmo, CapitalNewYork.com reported. She wants to do her own thing.

Jones has been known to be open to many sounds in whatever venue. The transformation begs the question: To what extent does an artist cave to audience demands in giving them the familiar as opposed to opening their eyes and ears as an ambassador for new music at any cost?

Jones seemed to pull off the latter based on the foundation of respect she's received in the music world.

New haunting tunes of love lost, risk and even murder off "Little Broken Hearts" accompanied that soft, finely-tune voice. The upbeat, bouncy "Say Goodbye" declared: "Don't you miss the good old days when you let me misbehave?" Then, the creepy "Miriam" hushed the Tahoe crowd with a tale of fatal jealousy.



Norah Jones and her band play one of two encores. Photo/Kathryn Reed

She even threw in “The Long Way Home,” a country tune by offbeat singer Tom Waits off the “Feels Like Home” album. Her tribute to the man who could cross as an everyday, gritty barfly gave the audience an inner look into her own soul searching for something interesting and unique.

Jones’ show (priced from \$39.50 to \$69.50) provided a journey of peaks and valleys, slow and fast, soft and hard – with some extremes from her four-man backup band engineered so hot it was difficult to hear that award-winning voice. At times, the pulsating bass was loud enough to vibrate the floor.

But no sooner than the crowd may have pondered chair dancing, she sat at the piano for an honest calling for her love’s “heart to be true” with the bluesy “What Am I To You” off “Feels Like Home.”

The most memorable song of the night was not dedicated to any man, but to her dog – with her canine’s ultimatum: “It’s him or me.” She, in turn, rewarded him in lyrics written specifically for any red-blooded, canine-loving Tahoe female. “You never lie, you don’t cheat,” and have “no baggage on your four feet.”

The crowd erupted in applause and laughter with a thorough understanding of the message.

“I guess this is the right audience for this song,” she said with a big smile.

The audience stayed fully engaged for the next tune – her biggest hit from 2002, “I Don’t Know Why.”

And still, there was a two-song encore with another smash hit from the “Come Away With Me” ensemble – “Lonestar,” written to match her Texas roots. Then, the band stood side-by-side again for the feel-good plucking number “Creepin In” from “Feels Like Home.”

It appeared Jones felt like home in Tahoe, telling the crowd: “It’s nice to be here,” while appreciating “the lake is so clear.”

Indeed, Jones may say she’s her own tough act to follow. And given the dynamic performance by Cory Chisel and the Wandering Sons, she may say the same thing about her opening band.



Cory Chisel and the Wandering Sons are destined to be the lead act one day.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

“We’re happy to be in Tahoe for the very first time. We’re the mood setters. That’s our job,” said front-man Chisel, who added he was grateful to have their three-person ensemble’s “voices bounce off these beautiful mountains.”

The singer, guitarist donning a Jason Mraz-type hat delivered tunes both sentimental and introspective – bouncing from a love song to “the right person at the wrong time” to a caring tune about his new home state of Tennessee from “some natural

born Yankees.” The song resembled a light kiss, and the emotion seemed real all over his face. The set ended with a rousing blues gospel tune.

Chisel’s sound and heart-felt messages are reminiscent of Bruce Springsteen or even the legendary poet, singer Neil Young – who appropriately so, packed the house last week with 6,500 fans on a weekday in Tahoe.

Country music superstar Toby Keith also delivered that many on a recent weekday night. Harrah’s-Harveys spokesman John Packer told *Lake Tahoe News* the concert series is “going great.”

“It’s better than last year,” Packer said.

And it’s not over.

The old lounge blues mixes with the 1980s pop blues when Joe Cocker and Huey Lewis and the News team up Aug 17. The next day, country sensation Sugarland – with its toe-tapping, finger-snapping style – will also play in Tahoe. Cabo Wabo’s own Sammy Hagar rounds out the summer Sept. 1 with the Red Rockers.