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Sloane: A Jazz Singer
Michael Lippert (goingbarefoot.inc)
by Ori Dagan

Critically acclaimed, deeply revered and criminally under-the-radar vocalist Carol Sloane passed away on January 23rd at the age of 85. The new documentary *Sloane: A Jazz Singer* sets out to justify her place in the pantheon. After introducing us to a tasteful, sophisticated vocalist with golden ears, the film eventually uncovers a tough yet tender woman who is impossible not to love.

Hailed as “one of the best in the business” following her debut at the 1961 Newport Jazz Festival, Sloane was promptly signed to Columbia Records; in one of the film’s most touching scenes, the octogenarian listens to the original tape of “Little Girl Blue” from Newport with a cathartic tear in her eye. Enter Beatlemania: jazz clubs were folding, Sloane’s career on the decline, her hopes getting slender. The film goes on to expose progressively darker blues, finding the artist penniless, drunk, divorced and even suicidal:

“When you go through hell, keep going.” Sloane found new love and made a comeback when she signed with Contemporary and then Concord Records. She made over 30 albums in her lifetime, all gems.

Included in the documentary are interviews with critics, peers and friends as well as footage from her storied career, including a rousing televised version of “Sweet Georgia Brown” from 1962 that begs to be seen and heard in its entirety. The film proceeds to focus on preparations for Sloane’s final album, *Live at Birdland* (her last NYC concert and penultimate live appearance), recorded in Sep. 2019 with the stellar Mike Renzi (piano), Jay Leonhart (bass) and Scott Hamilton (tenor). Priceless are the behind-the-scenes footage of rehearsals and jitters, and the capturing of the ultimate triumph of this live recording, as well as its motivation from the vocalist: “It sounds silly, but what I want to hear is ‘Miss Sloane, the house is Standing Room Only’, and then when I finish my set, I want a vigorous applause and a standing ovation that I deserve, not because it’s the fashion to do it, but because I really did earn it. That’s what I want.”

Despite Sloane’s modesty, director Michael Lippert managed to document her unflinching honesty, sparkling wit and scintillating humor—all qualities that carry over to her delightfully swinging, authentically spontaneous style of singing. “Art don’t pay”, she declares in the film. This documentary is an invaluable gift to all of us who loved Sloane, and will undoubtedly earn her new fans with each screening.

For more information, visit goingbarefoot.com