

Karla Bonoff in memorable gig



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Schenectady - It would be hard to find a Californian singer-songwriter with a better pedigree than Karla Bonoff.

In 1969, she sang at the legendary Troubadour, where she rubbed elbows with James Taylor, Jackson Browne and Elton John. She was then referred to record execs by a member of The Doors and soon formed a band called Bryndle with Wendy Waldman, soon-to-be popstar Andrew Gold and future Stone Poney Kenny Edwards.

Eventually, her compositions were recorded by Linda Ronstadt, Aaron Neville, Wynonna and Bonnie Raitt, and she even had a top-40 hit of her own - "Personally" - which oddly, was a cover.

In Schenectady, the now 40-something Bonoff made her way through the packed room carrying a cup of tea, looking quite youthful in dark straight hair with bangs and a colorful patchwork velvet top.

She and her longtime musical sidekick Kenny Edwards picked up guitars and

broke into the yearning "How Long" as her soothing and seductive voice rose to the bare wood rafters in an understated, pure and honest way.

From the lilting country waltz feel of "Home," the expansive "New World" and the hopeful "The Way of the Heart" to the anxious "Please Be the One," Bonoff showed she may have written a lot of hits, but never in a calculated or pragmatic, chart-conscious manner. Her tunes have become popular purely because of their undeniable greatness.

Kenny Edwards offered superb support on guitar, bass, mandolin and harmony, which was steeped in their 30 years of collaborating. A solo turn on his own "Hate Letters to Los Angeles" called "Bitter Wheel" was impressive. Angry? Yes. Good? Very.

Bonoff's content, knowing smile came with soft, sad eyes, and you knew "Lose Again" (about a broken romance) "Goodbye My Friend" (about the loss of a loved one) weren't just songs, but personal pages from her life. She sings of an epic life of love and loss that some dream of, but most are simple scared of.

"Well morning is breaking, the street lights are off - the sun will soon share the cost - of a world that can be sort of heartless." There are few songs that document bleak isolation, loneliness and inner struggle of being alone in the city as deeply as the haunting "Someone To Lay Down Beside Me." From the eerie piano intro chords to the harrowing chorus, Bonoff brought the crowd with her on a intensely moving musical journey - one few there will soon forget.

Given the emotional impact of her tunes, Bonoff has a relatively reticent and laid back manner, but she holds the grace and passion of a true artist. You can't just listen to her, you have no choice but to become drawn in and involved and invest something yourself.

The end result was one of the most meaningful and memorable shows to have come to the Van Dyck in quite some time.