

## CABARET SPOTLIGHT

by Jeff Rossen

**S**o you decide to stop in at a local cabaret or piano bar to partake of the libations and listen to some music for a while. But even though the live performance hasn't started yet, you settle into a comfortable spot and sip a preshow cocktail, thinking, well, I'll stay for a few songs and then head on home. Oh, the best-laid plans. Then you find yourself still sitting there at the end of the evening because you've been having such a darned good time listening to the incredibly inviting and irresistibly appealing **Amy Cole**. Such was the case when my husband and I dropped in at 3160.

Where? What? Yes, Virginia, there is a new cabaret club in town, although it's been a well-kept secret. But the secret's out now, kids. 3160 (in the site of the old Annex 3 on Clark, just south of Belmont ) is a sensationally elegant and comfortable cabaret-piano bar that is a most welcome addition for those who want to experience live music. Bravo, bravo, bravo to owner Jim Flint for creating this exceptional new venue.

With its design dedicated to offering both the audience and the performer a space where both feel comfortable while providing those who wish to sit with their feet on the bar rail and chat with friends a place to do so and not having one compete or conflict with the other, I have to say that 3160 is the finest blending of the two usually divergent venues I've ever encountered. To put it bluntly, I absolutely *love* this place.

But back to the sensational Amy Cole.

"It's nice here," Cole said as she began her two-set night, "it's so hot [outside]." But the temperature quickly rose inside as well as she and accompanist Jeff Roscoe pumped up the heat. You've got to admire a performer who has the guts to start off a set softly with *Moon River* . But that was a signal that Cole was going to do things her way. And "her way" is a great way to go. When it comes to pop music, Cole is at her peak. A poignant read of Stevie Wonder's *Lately* (with Roscoe's perfect harmony on the chorus) and an exemplary delivery of *Superstar* (showing her intuitiveness when she couldn't do my husband's request of *Out Here On My Own* but found another power ballad instead) along with a wholly spontaneous *Get Here* showed that Cole knows this area so very well. But she's equally at ease giving us a lovely look at *Secret Love* and reveling in the allure of "his tender lips" in *My Foolish Heart* (the subtle lyric change of "your" to "his" here produced a glorious moment in Cole's performance).

Along with a fine mix of standards and pop songs -- Cole really shines when dipping into '70s and '80s pop -- Cole offers something unique during her performance, a little bit she calls "S.O.S.," or "Songs On the Spot." With information about someone written on a card -- traits, characteristics, quirks -- Cole creates an original song right on the spot. A bluesy turn about "that lying lawyer daughter of mine" and jaunty bit about a "cabaret lover" were wonderfully entertaining and part of an immensely enjoyable performance by the terrifically engaging Amy Cole. Stop in to 3160 and experience her -- and this fabulous club -- for yourself. (\*\*1/2)

*Amy Cole performs on Thursdays in August at 3160, 3160 N. Clark . No cover or minimum. 773-327-5969.*

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