



Review / Vocalist Sarah L King wows lunchtime crowd at Pizza Express Soho, announces more gigs

Vocalist Sarah L King wows lunchtime crowd at Pizza Express Soho, announces more gigs

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THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2025

Promoting her *Fire Horse* album in front of an appreciative Soho crowd, Sarah L King also announced a raft of new shows following a run of sold-out gigs



Sarah L King, with Jim Watson on the piano

Photo: Amit Lennon

At a packed and wildly appreciative lunchtime house at Soho's Pizza Express, UK vocalist **Sarah L King** played numbers from her acclaimed 2024 *Fire Horse*, accompanied by some top-notch musicians and some star guests. The band was essentially the same as on *Fire Horse*: **Jim Watson** on piano, **Laurence Cottle** on electric bass and **Luke Tomlinson** on drums (replacing album drummer Ian Thomas), and they kicked off with a hard-swinging version of the **Bob Dorough** classic 'Devil May Care', boosted by Cottle's supple bass and Watson's fluid piano.

The King originals 'As Though You Were Mine', 'Born Yesterday' and 'Holding On To Love' demonstrated the singer's gifts as a composer, while 'Mystery Ride' another strong self-composition, featured backing vocals from famous friends **Claire Martin** (also the album's producer) and **Ian Shaw**. Highlight of the first set was a wonderfully sensitive reading of **Billy Strayhorn's** 'Lush Life', with Watson again outstanding.

Set Two launched with 'Skyscapes', a touching and refreshingly honest tribute to King's father, while a version of **Oliver Nelson's** 'Stolen Moments', with added lyrics from King, allowed all three instrumentalists to shine on engaging solos. Another SJK original dedicated to a family member (this time son Noah), 'Your Biggest Fan' highlighted Cottle's sensitive playing and 'Snowblind', featuring just King and Watson, held the audience rapt. Then Martin and Shaw returned for three storming numbers – King's funky 'Black Dog', and covers of the **Gamble & Huff/Jacksons** banger 'Show You The Way To Go' (taken as a kind of shuffle, and it worked terrifically well) and, for the encore, **Harry Edison and Jon Hendricks'** 'Centrepiece'.

King and her band are a great live prospect, and if the above whets your appetite, you can catch up with her on a quartet of just-announced dates. These include: 15 March – Hampstead Jazz Club, London NW3 (8pm); 26 April – Pizza Express Soho, W1 (1pm); and the 606 Club, London SW3 on 18 May at 1pm. There's also a show in Stockholm, at the Glenn Miller Café on 28 July at 8pm.

Make sure you catch 'em!