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# Music: Rickie Lee Jones Swashbuckles Through "Pirates" at City Winery

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**RICKIE LEE JONES** \*\* 1/2 out of \*\*\*\*  
**CITY WINERY**

RICKIE LEE JONES -- LIVE IN STOCKHOLM (\$24.98; Megaforce)

Fans at **City Winery** enjoyed hearing Jones perform her classic debut and the acclaimed followup *Pirates*, which came out 30 years ago this month. But why are so many acts from new bands to enduring talents like **Rickie Lee Jones** deciding to perform albums in their entirety during a concert? Lots of reasons and all of them make sense.

One, it's a rebellion against the shuffle mode on music

MP3 players.

Two, it makes a concert special, not just a random selection of a few new tracks, some greatest hits and a handful of obscurities and covers like so many shows in the past.

Three, it reestablishes the album as an art form. It's great that digital music allows artists to release EPs and singles whenever the mood strikes. But the idea that the album is dead is just silly. Creating a group of songs meant to be heard in a certain order at one sitting has been around for decades. (I nominate Frank Sinatra as one of the first to pioneer and certainly perfect the idea.) Just because singles are happily back in fashion doesn't mean the album is over, any more than the fact that a new market

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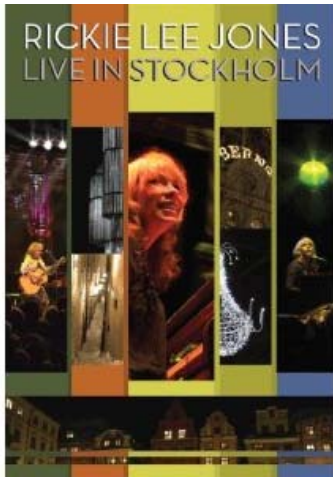
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opening up for short stories would mean novels were permanently passe.

It was a treat for fans with Jones -- getting over the flu and laughingly telling us she was on speed or wouldn't have been able to make it -- first performing *Pirates* and then her eponymous debut, by and large.

The show began creakily with 15 minutes of footage from her new DVD *Rickie Lee Jones -- Live In Stockholm*. It was random footage when at least they might have played some complete songs they anticipated would NOT be performed in the concert we were about to see. Plus, it would have been nice if this was screened before the 8 p.m. start time. Maybe only Rickie Lee Jones could open up for Rickie Lee Jones but this promo should not have delayed the start of the concert, which is how it felt. That said, the concert is blessedly low on quick-cutting. Jones is in fine form and it has a healthy dose of more than 2 and a half hours of content overseen by director Ian McCrudden.



After that, the show proper began at 8:30 but it was not smooth sailing. Two songs in, Jones wondered what the next number was on *Pirates* she was due to perform. "Skeletons!" numerous people shouted out hopefully. "Skeletons' it is," she answered gamely, going on to deliver a sad little story about breaking up with a guy who left her in a house filled with fan mail where she wrote this tune.

Jones fiddled with the sound, dealt with an annoying audience member who insisted on trying to talk directly to Jones but cutting him to the quick with a choice curse word (though unfortunately the schmuck will probably dine out on the tale for years), directed the band, grooved to her excellent horn section, told a rambling disjointed tale about being arrested on July 4th in 1970 and generally cut a distinctive, strong-willed figure as an artist not quite feeling it that night but still delivering the goods.

Are you done eating, she asked early on, since [City Winery](#) serves meals, encouraging fans to arrive early and eat up long before the show begins. "Finish up!" she said half amusingly, half commandingly. "I don't like to sing for people who are eating." Who would? Telling a story about getting arrested at the border for not wearing a bra (so she says) led right into a righteous version of her signature first hit "Chuck E.'s In Love" and a string of tunes from that stellar debut.

It may be easier to celebrate those early successes since her most recent album *Balm In Gilead* was a **distinct return to form I considered one of the best albums of 2009**. No need to rest on her laurels for Jones. Despite a lingering bug, her voice was its usual distinctive affair, with Jones playing with her distance from the microphone to dramatic effect, especially when bringing the band to silence and hypnotizing the crowd with her sung-spoken lyrics at the finale. Anyone without her classic debut or mid-period masterpiece *Flying Cowboys* (I'd love to attend the show when she performs that on **July 6 or 7th at City Winery**) is missing out on some great work by a genuine original.

And while this concert was not one for the ages, no one would ever accuse the crankily alive Jones of sleepwalking through a set. She was present and accounted for, even if her fans didn't always give her the quiet attention she deserved.

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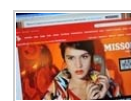


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Scarlett Johansson

NOTE: Why don't venues -- especially ones that cater to a sit-down crowd like [City Winery](#) -- ban ALL photography and recording during a show? They made an announcement at the beginning, but no waiters or waitresses interfered as patrons repeatedly lifted their cell phones into the air and took picture after picture. Even if the flash is off (and it wasn't always), no artist wants to sing to a cell phone and the cameras are incredibly distracting to everyone sitting behind those clueless shutterbugs. Further, if I were an artist, I'd encourage everyone to whip out their phones and cameras and FlipVideos and say, "Okay, take all the images you want during this first song. Go crazy! Then put them all away for the rest of the show. Alright?" Let people get their snap and then shame them into not messing with everyone's pleasure for the rest of the night. Just a thought.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the cohost of *Showbiz Sandbox*, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's available free on iTunes. Visit [Michael Giltz at his website](#) and his [daily blog](#). Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called *Popsurfing* and also available for free on iTunes. Link to him on [Netflix](#) and gain access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

NOTE: Michael Giltz was provided with free tickets to this show with the understanding that he would be writing a review.

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