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BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 24, 2006

## Corinne Bailey Rae At Webster Hall \*\*\*\*

Never been to Webster Hall somehow; it's a bit larger than Bowery Ballroom (where Rae performed a few months ago) and the walls are covered in a mish-mash of exotic designs: some Indian, some Chinese or Asian and then the odd seashell just to keep you guessing. I'm in the "VIP" area upstairs, which is lucky since the main floor is jammed very early on. I walked in ten minutes before her Bowery Ballroom set and got right near the stage. Tonight I arrived an hour early and I would have been way in the back if not for my access to the balcony. Luckily, two women (presumably the mom and sister or friend of the opening act) vacate their seats right at the balcony edge before Rae comes on and we have excellent sight-lines from stage right.

Rae was wonderful the first time I saw her, but perhaps her hand-motions and other bits of business were somewhat studied. Tonight she is in full control, her voice sounds glorious and she plays every song on the album plus that ferocious Led Zeppelin cover. A few people toss her flowers and one fellow also hands up a tiny Barneys New York bag, because of course she's wealthier than ever so naturally she needs some free jewelry or whatever.

I love the way Rae still seems sweetly overwhelmed by the applause and the fact that people are embracing her music. She scrunches up her face and offers a "Thank you" time and time again. The finale "Seasons Change" (a Stevie Wonder wig-out) is sensational. Rae says she is already a bit weary of being a star and all the attendant attention. (Fleet Street people have camped out on her family's doorstep.) Well, it's just getting started I'm afraid. She is the real deal.

POSTED BY MICHAEL IN NEW YORK AT 4:45 PM



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