

Comfort Food

by Michael Dresdner

Once again, the redoubtable David Duvall, acting as musical arranger, director, and all around impresario, brought a divine musical experience to Centerstage. This time this musical genius took up the art of the late, great crooner Nat 'King' Cole.

Unfortunately, it was a one night only performance, but fear not. It's part of a series, and I promise I'll give you a shot at what's coming at the end of this review. First, let me tell you what you missed, so you'll be loath to miss another.



Sheldon Craig

The all Cole evening featured Sheldon Craig, a singer dripping with great talent, a beautiful voice, and a personality that rivaled both. A smoothly polished night club performer, he brought the best of the stage to a sold out audience; every one of the 234 seats was filled, and

every one emptied into a standing ovation when he was done.

It was well deserved. Craig was a delight, lifting the room with bubbling, bouncing strains of classics like *Route 66* and *Papa Loves Mambo*. During the infectious *Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer*, he even got his audience to sing along. Balancing it were the warm notes of songs like *Mona Lisa* and *An Affair to Remember*, where his lush voice wrapped around you like a wooly blanket.

The evening was, from start to finish, a pure delight, with Craig covering dozens of the great Cole songs those of us long enough in the tooth fondly remember. In between, there was the comforting patter of one who clearly loved his subject, and the pure enthusiasm of one who clearly loved what he was doing. So, too, did the audience.

Backing Craig was one of Duvall's wonderful pickup groups. As usual, Duvall arranged, conducted and covered piano and other keyboards. With him were nine other multi-instrumentalists (Eric Brewster, Rick Cole, Dr. Ron Cole, Bud Jackson, Bill Branvold, Margaret Thorndill, Milo Petersen, Cary Black, Don Dietrich) who, in various iterations, offered a range of sounds from something akin to a small jazz group to the feel of a respectable pit orchestra. And behind them, a draped chiffon backdrop (designed by

Amy Silvera) acted as a lighting palette, changing colors to match the mood of each song.

Granted, you missed this one (it was sold out before the doors opened), but the good news is that Duvall will be bringing similar evenings, showcasing other vocal greats, to Alan Bryce's wonderful Centerstage theatre in the near future.

Here's what's in store:

Believe in Yourself: The Lena Horne Songbook -- with Stacie Calkins, Laurie Clothier and LaVon Hardison
Saturday, Feb. 16, 2013

It's a Good Day for Miss Peggy Lee -- with Lindsey Larsen
Saturday, April 13, 2013

Reflections of The Supremes
Saturday, July 13, 2013

As before, these are ONE NIGHT ONLY, so take my advice and reserve your tickets early. Missing one is sad. Missing the others (now that I've warned you) would be a real pity.