

INDAILY

Ronnie Taheny: powerhouse performer

Rosemary Cadden | 3 February 2014

MUSIC REVIEW | “Intelligent and witty, athletic, erudite” – these adjectives used by Ronnie Taheny to describe her perfect man in her fabulous poem “A Darcy before I Die” could equally describe this diminutive dynamo herself.

From the minute Taheny took to the stage at The Gov on Friday night, she once again had the audience enthralled. I say once again, because this appearance at The Gov is now an eagerly anticipated annual event, where the singer struts her stuff for her big band of supporters from far and near. Groupies from the Yorke Peninsula and her hometown of Edithburgh appear to have every one of her CDs in their collection.

Friday was a very warm night, so we rehydrated and prepared for take-off, having been frisked on arrival (optional!) and introduced to a world of immigration palaver: a cute reference to Taheny’s claim to have put her own passport at the back of the sock drawer for now, and a foreshadowing of muted but nonetheless astute asides re political machinations over Australia’s current “new arrivals”.

And a very smooth and swift take-off it was.

The support act was a stripped-down version of Adelaide band Avenue, with duo Lucas Sly and Ryan Mifsud comfortably mixing things around to show their versatility and virtuosity. They began the set with “Pray and Wait” (from EP *The Lantern Festival*), one of three Avenue songs that made it into the Top 10 on the Triple J *Unearthed* chart at the end of last year.

Minus drummer Miles Sly, Lucas (guitar and vocals) and Ryan (swapping his usual bass for keyboard) offered up a clever mix of musical genres – from dark rock to pop to folk, with a little country thrown in. Their set previewed a selection of strong new songs that Avenue took into the recording studio on the weekend, in preparation for their third CD release later this year.

This young band is flying high: a masterful choice to set the pace and begin a night of great musicianship.

From pounding on the keyboard to rockin' and a-rollin' with the guitar, from casually inserting insightful comments on world issues into her repartee to hilarious tall but true personal tales, Ronnie Taheny delivered a set that was uber-athletic and eclectic, to say the least. Imagine an even more anarchic Tim Minchin and a sassier Pink rolled into one powerhouse of a performer.

This woman has some serious things to say – but she's not one to take herself seriously. A very attractive combination. It's hard to believe she's been performing for, what did she say, more than 20 years? That would make her... I want what she's having!

Taheny was joined on stage by Jarrad Payne, mainly on drums, but also on guitar and vocals. Then on came Felicity Freeman (on bass) and Mark Ferguson (on main keys).

The set included songs from Taheny's past albums and some new ones. A highlight was "Gold Frankincense and Murder", a perfect example of the singer's way with words, hitting out at the West's supercilious belief in its superiority over others. She was eager to show off the skills of her fellow performers, with the big cadenza at the end giving Ferguson full permission to soar.

The audience, of course, refused to let Taheny and her band leave the stage without an encore. Do yourself a favour. Pencil in a reminder to check the date of her return flight to The Gov next year.