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## Review: Rene Marie, Dans Paleis, George Square

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**Rene Marie \*\*\*\***

**Dans Paleis, George Square**

Jazz singer Rene Marie is not one to play by the rules.

Unfulfilled with following in the footsteps of Fitzgerald or Simone, the Virginia native has turned to writing her own original material - much to the chagrin of her fellow jazz contemporaries. However, it was this surprisingly diverse, often free-verse collection of songs which provided the basis for last night's set at Dans Paleis.

Marie was partnered by a deft band including pianist Kevin Bales, Kevin Hamilton on bass (a recent addition to Marie's line-up) and drumming virtuoso Quentin Baxter.

The evening began with a brilliant minimalistic blues solo from Hamilton before diving into Marie's own and smouldering reverie *Lover Man Oh Where Can You Be*, her voice moving from a low purr to a high-pitched howl, mid-phrase.

Marie's powerful emotive resonance, her haunting slide between registers, her awareness of tone and timbre made the music sound both personal and highly persuasive.

The intimacy of the night was heightened when the songstress made a compelling dedication to a long-time devotee and her late husband. Marie stirred emotions with her soulful interpretation of Duke Ellington's *Just Squeeze Me (But Please Don't Tease Me)*, bringing the audience to a stunned silence.

She followed the standard with a new song detailing the innocence of childhood, in which any trace of cloying sentiment was dispelled by Bale's delicate, shifting accompaniment. The apogee of the set, however, was Marie's exquisite version of Billie Holiday's *God Bless the Child*.

A mid-tempo, dynamic reworking, ultimately cemented Marie's right to be considered within the upper echelon of jazz greats, while remaining true to her own progressive legacy.

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