Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Sandra Bernhard, Working Woman

Alan Berman · Thursday, August 18th, 2011

Sandra Bernhard is back in L.A. for a two-week run at REDCAT to promote her recent album, *I Love Being Me, Don't You?* Or perhaps the album promotes the tour–it's hard to say since she included hardly any of the recorded material in her 100-minute performance Friday night. If you know Bernhard only through YouTube videos or guest appearances on talk shows, or even from her albums, you don't know her vast range until you've seen her live. The show was a balanced blend of standup, stories, and music.

Bernhard's an assured, emotional singer, and the audience responded to the risk inherent in the intermixing of music and narrative. After all, if the story isn't strong enough, the music could smother it; likewise, if the story conveys too much, the music could seem gimmicky. In more than one sequence, the exquisite tension she created between sentiment and raucous hilarity left us wondering if we should laugh or send condolences. Sure, she took a few of her trademark cheap shots at the celebrities who are the typical easy targets. She has insisted in interviews that she's not being cruel with these remarks, just honest, and we would expect no less from her. But the highlights of her show weren't the insults–what she did best was that inspired threading of songs and stories.

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