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From the Los Angeles Times

JAZZ REVIEW

## Live: Anat Cohen

The gifted Israeli-born horn player makes further inroads through the boys' club wall with her performance at Hollywood and Highland.

By Don Heckman

Special to The Times

July 31, 2008

Israel-born Anat Cohen's Southland debut at Hollywood and Highland on Tuesday night was an impressive display of the qualities that last year garnered her awards from Down Beat and the Jazz Journalists Assn. -- and it also offered hope that a female horn player, fluent on clarinet and alto, tenor and soprano saxophones, will finally eradicate the outmoded notion that the art form is strictly the provenance of male performers.

While the clarinet has not been one of the prominent jazz instruments since its heyday in the Swing-era playing of Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw and others, in Cohen's hands -- playing material as diverse as Fats Waller's perky "Jitterbug Waltz," her own impressionistic "Washington Square Park" and a finger-busting choro by the great Brazilian composer Pixinguinha -- the instrument came alive, bursting with post-modernist improvisational transformations.

Her fleet melodic articulation and driving rhythms were supported by an irresistibly charismatic presence. Clarinet held high, her long, black, curly hair a whirling halo, she easily enticed listeners into the energetic orbit of her music. Offbeat arrangements of pieces such as "Jitterbug Waltz," with its unexpected accents, added a touch of spice to the familiar. And her own lyrical "The Purple Piece" managed to produce a few minutes of entranced calm in Hollywood and Highland's usually hyperactive central plaza.

Cohen has come by her versatility the hard way, working as a regular in the New York City club scene, playing for a salsa dance one night, with a choro band the next, and occasionally getting together for a family jam with her brothers -- Yuval, also a saxophonist, and trumpet player Avishai. A similar diversity surfaces on her recordings, which reveal a growing maturity as a composer and arranger, especially on the soon to be released album "Notes From the Village."

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**FOR THE RECORD:** An earlier version of this review incorrectly identified Avishai Cohen as a bassist. He plays the trumpet.

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Although she had played in Israeli jazz groups as a teenager and majored in jazz at the High School for the Arts, Cohen's experience with the challenges of top-level performance were relatively slim when she came to Boston in the mid-'90s to study at the Berklee College of Music, where she began to explore her imaginative approach to the clarinet.

But it was Cohen's move in the late '90s to the creatively and socially diverse environment of Manhattan's West Village that opened the floodgates for her creative development. Since then, she's worked to establish a presence, dealing with what she describes as "attitude" from other musicians, club owners and booking agents who have doubts about the skills and marketability of a female horn player.

Anyone who saw Cohen's Tuesday night performance, with its convincing blend of musical authenticity and magnetic appeal, can only wonder about those who would express any doubt at all.

Thumbnail photo: <http://www.anatcohen.com/live>, courtesy Bill Westmoreland

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