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Nicholas, Glover & Wray redux



NG&W have been singing together off and on since the 1970s.

Trio now singing nostalgic tunes with a fresh approach

By Philip Elwood
EXAMINER MUSIC CRITIC

NICHOLAS, GLOVER & Wray, the Bay Area's answer to the Boswell, Andrews and McGuire sisters, are back onstage again, singing Fridays through Sundays in Joe LoCoco's Coconut Room at Drake's Landing, Greenbrae.

Julie Nicholas, Sheilah Glover and Willow Wray have been vocalizing together since the late 1970s. Sporadically over the years the trio has broken up (each has other musical enthusiasms), only to reorganize and perform again.

Although this on-again, off-again pattern has frustrated their fans, these sabbaticals have resulted in a fresh approach by NG&W to their older material as well as producing some new renditions.

The group has aptly titled the show at LoCoco's "We Couldn't Say Good-Bye," a truncated version of Harry Woods' 1932 "We Just Couldn't Say Good-Bye." NG&W sing it a la Boswell Sisters.

Other songs associated with the Boswells (Connee, Martha &

Vet) included in the Coconut Room show -- "Sentimental Gentleman from Georgia," "Crazy People," "Everybody Loves My Baby," "Put That Sun Back in the Sky," "Dinah" and "Stardust" -- which Connee featured for many years after the Boswells broke up.

NG&W don't feature the shrill soprano sound of the McGuire sisters (although they sing a superb version of the McGuires' "Blue Skies") and they don't have the nasal, jump-swing style of the Andrews sisters.

Again, though, their "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree" rendition (part of a "Sister Medley") splendidly captures the Andrews' spirit, if not whine.

Patti Page's multi-voice recording of "Old Cape Cod" inspires a nice trio treatment by NG&W, and bewigged Wray (in a period-piece red chiffon dress) does a knock-out impression of Connie Francis' chirpy vocals on "Who's Sorry Now," "Lipstick on Your Collar," and "Where the Boys Are."

Each of the trio presented a solo rendition -- "Never Make Your Move too Soon" sung by Nicholas; "Footsteps" by Glover and "Hollywood Motel," by Wray are both originals.

Nicholas did a nice job with the B.B. King number and both the originals are well composed, with strong lyric lines and continuity.

"Footsteps" is particularly unusual these days -- a traditionally harmonized ballad. "Hollywood Motel," a rock-ballad with a bit of the "American Pie" structure, deals with Janis Joplin of whom Wray is very fond. Which is rather interesting, since one of Wray's first gigs was with Berkeley folk-jazz bandleader Dick Oxtot -- with whom Joplin sang in the early 1960s.

On piano last weekend was Joyce Imbesi; this weekend and through April 4, John Turner resumes his role as accompanist.