



The San Diego
Union-Tribune.

ALLYSON'S ARTISTRY WILL LEAVE YOU JAZZED

By George Varga

Pop Music Critic

2:00 a.m. May 21, 2009

Union-Tribune, Page W9

There's an enormous difference between budding talent and proven skill, and between youthful enthusiasm and finely honed excellence. Witness the differences between Karrin Allyson, who next Wednesday concludes the Athenaeum Jazz at Neurosciences Institute spring concert series in La Jolla ([ljathenaeum.org/jazz.html](http://jathenaeum.org/jazz.html)) and Melissa Morgan, who performed May 13 at downtown's Anthology. Morgan, 28, recently released her very promising debut album, on which she demonstrates the potential to build upon her biggest vocal influences (specifically Nancy Wilson, Peggy Lee and Anita O'Day). Alas, Morgan's lack of polish and experience came to the fore on stage and it became clear she requires more time to polish her craft and to achieve the emotional and musical depth that separates a gifted newcomer from an accomplished veteran.

Allyson has released 11 albums since 1992. At 45, she is at the top of her game – a first-rate singer who performs with equal poise and ability in several languages. She has the ability to shine whether performing songs by jazz icons (John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie, Wayne Shorter), pop luminaries (James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Elton John) or artists from other disciplines (Antonio Carlos Jobim, Mose Allison, Chris Smither).

Allyson never sounds predictable, even when essaying classics familiar to jazz aficionados and casual listeners alike. She doesn't show off, and has no need to, thanks to her luminous voice, mastery of nuance and her ability to surprise (Cole Porter's "Night and Day" as a svelte bossa-nova, anyone?).

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