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**CLUB REVIEWS**



Robyn Habel: "Australian for folk singer."

**Robyn Habel**  
*Genghis Cohen*  
West Hollywood

Contact: Robyn Habel Management: 818-982-7758  
The Players: Robyn Habel, guitar, double bass and vocals.

Material ..... 7  
Vocals ..... 9  
Musicianship ..... 9  
Performance ..... 9

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Robyn Habel has made some serious headway in her home of Australia, and, after seeing her perform this solo show here in the States, it's easy to see why. Her sound is a roots/pop blend best described as a female John Mellencamp with balls. One could imagine the current Foster's Lager ad campaign including a video clip of Habel showcasing her voice and her look—a flash of golden-red hair that is long and curly, not cutie, but rather rugged and Sixties-like, reminiscent of Janis Joplin on her sober days—the clip being followed by the tag-line of "Robyn Habel, Australian for Folk Singer."

No big Australian crowd here. This show was under attended, and when Habel took the stage I expected it to be an awkward moment. But to her credit, Habel came here to impress people whether there were two people in the room or two thousand, and she did just that. Launching into "Million Dollar Man," she instantly put any awkwardness to rest as she invited the small audience into the performance with authoritative strumming and a commanding, charismatic voice.

Habel's voice is her strongest asset. At times, it is downright stunning. The obvious comparison in vocal sound is Melissa Etheridge—that low raspy tone some women have that drives men nuts

(in a good way)—kind of like Demi Moore's speaking voice. The stunning part is either an audible illusion or Habel really is able to sing a note an octave lower than the main note, in effect harmonizing with herself live. It doesn't even seem intentional, just a residual effect of the fullness, raspiness and power of her voice. Yet as raspy as she can get, she also shows incredible smoothness in many vocal passages, proving that she's not a one trick pony.

The only weakness that Habel shows is her lyrics. While at times they can be very good, many phrases and some whole songs come off as overly self-righteous. The problem here is an attempt to be profound and cutting too wide a swath, rather than focusing on the telling detail that one can latch onto. The metaphors often deal with large social issues and tend to be obvious rather than subtle.

Once in a while, though, Habel's metaphors work, like in the song "Cease Fire," where village bells, struck to announce a temporary cease fire in a war, take on the role of all good things in times of peace. A cease fire being positive is a bit obvious, but it works here because of the image of the bells that Habel puts forth, and the sense of personal enjoyment in the bells themselves and what they bring about. It gives the song a sense of personal drama and involvement and saves it from being just another song telling us that war is bad.

While many of her lyrics could use some revision, the songs themselves are catchy, and Habel's performance is right on. And when she sets down the guitar in favor of the double bass for the bouncy feminist anthem "Be a Girl" (which is arguably her best song), and a haunting cover of Nirvana's "Come as You Are," she is absolutely captivating. With her voice full and raspy, yet somehow smooth, while her fingers coax bass notes, you know you're seeing someone unique. —*Carl Peel*

**Larry Dean & The Shooters**

*The Cinnamon Cinder*  
Burbank

Contact: Larry Dean: 818-704-6707

The Players: Larry Dean, lead vocals, acoustic guitar; Mickey Wells, steel; Danny Cifalia, lead guitar; David Sproul, bass; Ed Donner, drums; Michael Dart, vocals.

Material ..... 8  
Vocals ..... 8  
Musicianship ..... 7  
Performance ..... 7

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

A long standing member of the Los Angeles C&W community, Larry Dean has traveled every hard road a cowboy honky tonk singer can travel, and has survived to tell the tale.

Dean's material is distinctively Country and Western. Images of the West abound. However, with the current Bakersfield Renaissance in full swing, the Bakersfield sound is also a part of Larry's music, and has been from the beginning of his career. He knows how to shuffle and twang, and he can sing a romantic waltz that is sure to bring a tear to your eye.

In addition to his power-driven cowboy material, Dean performed a few of the brilliant tracks from his latest disc, *From A Distance*, on Boulevard Records. "I'm Gettin' Known (For All the Wrong Reasons)" is a classic country song with a fresh hook, and "Sometimes Love Ain't Enough" also fits into the classic category. Dean's newer songs, like the bittersweet "Stay With Me" and "Is This The Way" are all candidates for the Number One spot on the real country music charts. Dean has a way of retaining his connection to tradition while still striking out on his own. Lyrically and melodically, he is a fine writer.

The musicianship here is dynamic. The Shooters are a precision band, able to pull out old standards at a moment's notice. Particularly impressive on this night was Mickey Wells and his very traditional steel. Wells' playing seemed to recreate the ambiance of an old, smoke-filled honky tonk from years past. Lead guitarist Danny Cifalia was also a stand-out during this particular performance. Ready and able, Cifalia hit all the right notes with flare, instilling his solos with sizzle. Overall, the Shooters work well together and have a good instinct for the music.

Larry Dean and his band are professionals. With a variety of original material and the laid-back style Dean takes, this is an act to be savored and enjoyed. Larry Dean & the Shooters are quality all the way. —*Jana Pendragon*