

Concert review: Nana Mouskouri at Sala Palatului

Romania-Insider

By Liam Lever

Published on December 5, 2011

Is Nana Mouskouri cool? Sala Palatului was packed out for last night's (December 4) concert, and yes, the majority of the crowd were middle aged. But not all, a fair number of young (and seemingly fairly cool) people were dotted about amongst Nana's more senior fans. Nana Mouskouri belongs to that select group of performers that have remained at the top for decades. In a way she transcends fashions in music, and wearing her trademark black rimmed glass, she can still do what she has always done best- sing songs a lot of people love very, very well. On stage Nana Mouskouri looked and sounded like she was exactly where she should be. Her band were- as might be expected- tight, extremely competent and definitely in the background. No instrumental histrionics here, the voice is unquestionably the star. A simple line-up: bass, kit, percussion, guitar/bouzouki and piano/keyboards. Perhaps a little disappointing was the extensive use of keyboards to fill out the orchestration, although a perfectly understandable choice. The alternative would have been essentially an orchestra.

After playing a selection of songs from her back catalog, Nana took it down. Accompanied only by keyboards she performed a memorable version of 'Somewhere over the Rainbow.' The Judy Garland classic is a real test for a singer, the simplicity of the accompaniment focuses the attention on Mouskouri's singing. Each note is an event in itself, her voices sweeps and soars through rich crescendos, laden with vibrato and then drops suddenly to single, softly sung word that hangs for a moment in space. Hints of Billie Holiday, but undeniably Nana Mouskouri- the conservatoire training, the jazz clubs, the traditional Greek folk music, they're all there. Part of the sound that is uniquely hers. She followed up with Amazing Grace, again showcasing her vocal talents, but with taste- none of the ostentatious showboating we hear at the Superbowl. A laid back Guantanamera, understated and easy with vocal phrasing that effortlessly set the lilting Cuban rhythm, was followed by some Greek favorites. After what wasn't her first, and almost certainly won't be her last, standing ovation, Mouskouri did 'The White Rose of Athens.' The song she refers to as "my passport" as it was this song, recorded for a German documentary back in 1961, that first won her international renown.

Regardless of trends in pop music, there are still a lot of people who want to listen to a great singer, singing good songs. And Nana Mouskouri does just that. Despite the length of her career, singing in many different languages, all around the world, she's still the girl from Greece with the big glasses and the great voice.

Liam Lever, liam@romania-insider.com

<http://www.romania-insider.com/concert-review-nana-mouskouri-at-sala-palatului/42395/>