



HENRY LEWIS

**Amy Regan: Impressive guitar skills with the personality and focus to succeed.**

**Amy Regan**  
*Rockwood Music Hall*  
 New York, NY

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**The Players:** Amy Regan, vocals, acoustic guitar, piano; Oscar Bautista, lead guitar; Eshy Gazit, bass; Adam Christgau, drums.

**Material:** Just when it seems there are few good songwriters anymore, Amy Regan comes along to dispel that notion. With nary a “hook” within earshot, she makes her case

with a lyrical maturity belying her apparent youth. Historical shades of Joni Mitchell, Laura Nyro and — surprisingly, yes — Crystal Gayle, are combined effortlessly into a unique “Reganesque” style of pop, folk, rock and cool jazz, which is remarkably pleasant to listen to. As for those “hits,” they are there. In fact, closer attention reveals subtle refrains incorporated into songs such as “Everybody Needs Somewhere To Go” and “Carry On.” Listeners will feel that Regan doesn’t need to hit them over the head with repetition, because she respects their intelligence and attention span.

**Musicianship:** Regan’s voice is beautifully pure with a piercing high end that she saves for special moments. Her low end may be a little thin, but it is rarely used and might be stronger with warming up. Her piano playing is adequate, but her acoustic guitar playing is impressive, considering her small hands and the complexity of the chord-work. The backup band are professional in their ability to stay out of her way. Eshy Gazit’s funky bass lines on the opener “Come In Real Close” locked nicely with Adam Christgau’s groove, and both men were always flexibly appropriate to the material at hand. Oscar Bautista also remained in the background, keeping his electric guitar solos short and soft but supplying some tasteful licks and textures to support his singer.

**Performance:** It was nice to hear a set of music that was constantly changing and full of surprises. Regan is a singer/songwriter who can deliver a country shuffle such as “Carry On,” or the jazzy love song to the Big Apple, “I Love New York,” and then suddenly switch off to a light samba ballad like “Nighttime Bird.” And Regan was supported by three fine musicians who knew just what to put in... and what to leave out.

However, the set may have been better if Regan hadn’t ended with a brand new song. “Get Moving” was the weakest number in the set, but that could have been more a testament to the high quality of the rest of the material. All in all, the cheers from the packed audience suggested that they were fully satisfied with the band’s performance that night.

**Summary:** Amy Regan is a young but fully developed new artist who is perfectly capable of keeping an audience’s attention when performing solo, with nothing more than an acoustic guitar, yet who can hold her own as the front person of a four-piece ensemble. Her album *And Then There Is This* shows a bit of both of those sides, and is a pretty good representation of the live show. Regan appears to have the personality and the focus to succeed in a business where simple talent is often not enough.

—Henry Lewis

**Sydney Sprague**  
*Knitting Factory*  
 Hollywood, CA

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**The Players:** Sydney Sprague, vocals, guitar, banjo.

was her first time performing in Los Angeles, you wouldn’t know it — definitely no spring chicken here.

**Performance:** Sprague was full of emotion and spirit. She described her inspirations and where they came from and did it while conversing with the audience in between songs, setting up a good

connection with her listeners. Through her facial expressions, anyone could see she has lived every word she sang. Sprague’s voice was the highlight of the show, crystal clear, with the ability to hit the higher notes on a whim.

**Summary:** A great voice, talent on the guitar and banjo, Sydney

Sprague grabs your attention right from the start. Poetic words derived from everyday life experiences meld with music to make listeners ponder their own lives. With a great deal of talent, yet room to grow, this artist is certainly going places sooner rather than later.

—Tom Laurie

**Material:** Direct and to the point, raw and full of emotion, Sydney Sprague’s lyrics move smoothly from one line to the next, making her songs easy on the ears. This performer’s music allows the listener to get lost in thought, and poetic material such as this is testament to that fact. “Nightmare” and “Watch You Go” flow beautifully from verse to verse. “Hole In The Back Of My Heart” is a simple but effective piece that is your classic breakup song.

**Musicianship:** Sprague’s voice is similar to a meadow brook gently pushing forth, full of depth and range on all levels. This artist shows talent on the guitar and banjo, but could benefit from a more complicated arrangement from time to time. Overall her musicianship is full of color and expression. Although it

TOM LAURIE



**Sydney Sprague: Raw and full of emotion with poetic words that make listeners ponder their own lives.**