

Joan Crowe

Publicity:

Ann Braithewaite
Ann@bkmusicpr.com
(781) 259-9600

Booking:

JoanCrowe@aol.com
(914) 632-6980
www.joancrowe.com



By Nancy A. Ruhling

Her innocent brown eyes gazing heavenward, Joan Crowe steps up to the microphone and soars rapturously into "Jesus Loves Me."

"Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me. Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me... "

Just when she's made you a true believer, that Sunday School smile turns into a devilish grin. She says, "It's kind of a tough love, isn't it?" and before you can say satan, her voice becomes sultry and she launches into "Trouble" and "I Want to Be Evil."

Now she's on hell fire, alternating between horns and halo: "Trouble? Are you looking for trouble, just look right into my face ... The Devil seems like so much more fun... I want to be bad ... I want to be EVIL! ... Jesus, well Jesus may have to think twice before loving me ..."

That's when director Mark Nadler decides to play devil's advocate. "You don't want the mike to cover up your face," he says. "The audience doesn't want to look at the mike, they want to look at your face no matter how attractive the mike is."

"And it's such a lovely mike," she rejoins.

Her performance is as polished as a diamond, but Crowe is a bit nervous because this is what she calls a "rough" performance: It's the first run-through for "The Devil in Miss Joan" at home in her Forsest Hills Garden studio, and there are all these bugs - like that scene-stealing microphone - that have to be worked out.

But Crowe needn't worry. Her previous cabaret shows, "Shooting Stars: The Music of Tom Brown" and "As the Crowe Flies," opened to critical acclaim ("Fabulous! Contemporary songwriters finally have someone to write for," The Associated Press gushed). And they received nominations for Manhattan Association of Cabaret and Clubs awards, the cabaret equivalent of the Oscars.

But bad for someone who had never sung in public before. You see, the world knows her as an actress, and you probably remember the tall, leggy, auburn-haired beauty with the high cheekbones from her recurring role in the TV soap "All My Children," where she still appears, or from roles in "Working Girl," "Presumed Innocent" and an "An Eye for an Eye." She traded the big screen for the homefront, taking off seven years to be with her children, 10-year-old Robbie and 5-year-old Marie. (She turned down a part in "Titanic" when she was pregnant with Marie.)

"I had what I call a breast-feeding epiphany," she says during a rehearsal break "It was late at night and I was feeding Marie and I pretended to be an 80-year-old woman looking back on my life and asked myself what I wanted to remembered for, and the answer was singing. I went out and got a voice teacher the next day. I decided to do cabaret because of my acting background. My act uses a lot of acting. I like to tell a story, a complete story that takes the audience through life's ups and downs and makes them laugh and cry."

Which brings us to Crowe's "The Devil in Miss Joan," whose very title, a takeoff on the 1982 porn flick "The Devil in Miss Jones" and on the 1941 Hollywood film "The Devil and Miss Jones that was a social commentary on union busting," tintillates.

"With this show, I wanted to explore sin," she says of the show that will play at Don't Tell Mama in Manhattan. "I wanted to take the seven deadly sins and explore them musically. The songs talk about lying, drug abuse, sex, adultery and meanness." She runs through the song list: "Good to Be God," "Getting Raptured," "I Love to Smoke," "Lullaby in Blue," "Me and Mrs. Jones."

"This show has everything from hookers to hookahs," Nadler interjects, getting her back to the microphone.

"But we don't talk too much about sex because I don't think sex is a sin," she adds.

Cut to rehearsal. She sings. He lists her sins: You're not funny enough here. That transition doesn't work. You've got to drop that song. You have to change that monologue. You're singing too fast. You're not sentimental enough on that number. Oh, and did I mention that that mike is still getting in your way? She nods. She's sorry for her sins. She WILL do better.

It's a rap. Rehearsal is over and confession accepted: "This is really a strong show," Nadler tells her. "I'm really loving this show."

And Crowe is really loving this rehearsal. She and Nadler have been working for weeks, but the run-through "is the fun part because that's when everything from the song list to the song order is finally decided."

As far as the show goes, Crowe says that there's still a whole lotta time for rehearsing -- and sinnin - before she takes the stage.

Right now, she's famished. She starts munching on a tray of cookies and stops herself. "I really shouldn't eat these," she says, as she bites into No. 4. Then that devilish look comes back into her eyes. "But it would be a sin to waste them," she says and laughs.

Joan Crowe's "The Devil in Miss Joan" with musical director Ted Firth on piano will be at Don't Tell Mama, 343 W. 46th St., Manhattan (between Eighth and Ninth Avenues), on May 7, 10, 17, 21. Call 212-757-0788 for reservations; \$12 ticket with two-drink minimum. Call up www.JoanCrowe.com for other concert dates.