

# NEW YORK POST

LATE CITY FINAL

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PLUS



Paula West slurs and purrs at FireBird Cafe through tonight.

## When she risks, West is best

WITH an easy, loping, suggestion of syncopation, Paula West — slurring the second word lazily but quite effectively — sang something that sounded likelike: “The bessss is yettt to come . . .

And right then and there, just in the way that she offhandedly but so assuredly put her own rhythmic spin on the first six words of her first song, she had me hooked. “And won’t it be fine . . .” she suggested. Uh-hmm; I could buy that.

It’s gutsy of West, who’s at the

Cabaret review

By Chip Deffaa

FireBird Cafe through tonight, to open with that Cy Coleman-Carolyn Leigh song. After all, this San Francisco-based singer is unknown in New York. And “The Best Is Yet to Come” has been memorably recorded by the two finest male pop vocalists of the past 40 years: Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett.

But she carried it off well, combining a subtle, sly but knowing jazz sensibility with a real respect for the songwriters’ intentions.

West was satisfying singing Benny Carter’s infectious “Cow Cow Boogie,” Leiber and Stoller’s sensuous “Some Cats Know,” and Sam Coslow and Tom Satterfield’s torchy, rarely revived “Restless.”

I’d love to hear her in a larger jazz context sometime, if anyone wanted to give her exposure at, say, the JVC Jazz Festival, Lincoln Center or the 92nd Street Y. She already sings with greater finesse and style than a number of better-known younger jazz singers.

Not every song choice of hers struck me as equally felicitous. I wish she could find something better by which to represent the Gershwins than “The Lorelei.” And I have a hunch the set would have greater punch if she programmed more variety into it. It’s a little bit more on one level, in terms of dynamics, tempo and mood, than I think wise. But there’s plenty in her act to appreciate, and I’m glad the FireBird’s booker, Peter Tear, has the courage to bring her to New York for a couple of weeks.

At the FireBird Cafe, 363 W. 46th St., (212) 586-0244; \$30 cover/2-drink minimum. Tonight at 9 and 11.