

Vibrant Celebration at the 2nd Annual Austin Women in Jazz Festival

by Pamela Hart
Special for the VILLAGER

(AUSTIN, TX) - The 2nd Annual Austin Women in Jazz Festival was an exhilarating journey from start to finish, showcasing powerhouse performances across two incredible days. Held on the weekend of September 21–22, the event delivered a captivating fusion of jazz, gospel, R&B, and soul, leaving the audience at the Austin PBS Pfluger Keller Community Soundstage in awe of the talent on display.

Day 1: A Tribute to Legends and Rising Stars

The festival kicked off Saturday night with a heartfelt tribute to the legendary Nancy Wilson, performed by the smooth and soulful **Pamela Hart**. Singing Wilson's signature tune, "Guess Who I Saw Today?", Hart captivated the audience with a stunning blend of ballads and swing numbers. Her elegant stage presence and vocal finesse set the tone for an inspiring evening of jazz.

Next, contemporary jazz vocalist **Christie Dashiell** took the stage, bringing selections from her critically acclaimed *Journey in Black* album. Standouts like "May Old Friend" and "Invitation" showcased Dashiell's rich tone and effortless control, transporting the audience with each note.

The energy shifted as **Chelsey Green and The Green Project** launched into a genre-bending performance. Their rendition of "My Favorite Things" blended jazz, gospel, and R&B, thrilling the crowd with bold improvisations and stirring rhythms. Green's violin mastery was on full display, and the set resonated with her eclectic musical influences.

Closing the first night was the incomparable **Maysa Leak**, whose big, bold voice filled every corner of the venue. Her set was a mix of sultry ballads like "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life" and dance-inducing hits like "Don't Stop the Music" and "Roller Coaster." By the end of her set, the crowd was dancing in the aisles, energized by Maysa's soulful, magnetic performance.

Day 2: Soulful Showcases and Unforgettable Collaborations

The festival's second day continued the momentum with another lineup of stellar performances. **Ange K.** opened the evening with a delightful array of genres, seamlessly moving from the jazzy "Exactly Like You" to a soulful, country rendition of "Tennessee Whiskey." Her versatility charmed the audience and set a vibrant tone for the night.

The spotlight then turned to lead instruments, with **Phylicia Rae** commanding attention on bass. Her funky, bass-driven performance of "Don't Ever Wonder" had the crowd up and dancing, while her playful take on "Isn't She Lovely" left the audience cheering. Her set, pulled from her *On My Way* album, was a masterclass in groove.

Kim Scott brought a unique flair to the evening, dazzling the audience with her expertise on both the concert and alto flutes. Her duet-style performance of "Best Part," where she played both the male and female flute parts, was nothing short of mesmerizing. Scott promised to take the audience on an emotional journey, and she delivered, especially with her hit "Shine." She ended her set with the electric anthem "I'm Every Woman," where Phylricia Rae joined her onstage, seamlessly



2024 Austin Women in Jazz Festival performers. Photo courtesy Women in Jazz

transitioning into the crowd-favorite "Before I Let Go."

The festival concluded with a rousing performance by **Kyle Turner and Friends**, featuring the ever-talented **Kerry Wilkins** on guitar. Turner's smooth sax on "Wrapped Tight" and Wilkins' electrifying rendition of "Purple Rain" brought the audience to their feet, swaying and singing along with their cell phone lights aloft. It was a magical end to a festival brimming with energy and emotion.

A Celebration of Jazz and Excellence

Throughout the entire weekend, the 2nd Annual Austin Women in Jazz Festival embodied the very essence of live music — connection, emotion, and pure joy. With an array of standout performers and a diverse range of musical styles, the festival

highlighted not only the richness of jazz but also the passion and talent of the women who continue to keep the genre alive.

This year's festival was especially significant, marking the 30th anniversary of the Women in Jazz Association, Inc., whose mission to keep jazz thriving has made an indelible mark on the Austin music scene. Thanks to generous support from donors, the City of Austin Economic Development Department, and local sponsors like The Villager Newspaper, Austin Revitalization Authority and Marwen and Son, LLC, the festival promises to continue inspiring audiences for years to come.

For those looking to catch the next wave of incredible performances, be sure to visit WomenInJazz.org and sign up for future updates. You won't want to miss what's coming next!



By Melissa Fontenette-Mitchell
Special for the VILLAGER

(AUSTIN, TX) Oct. 2, 2024 – The Texas Conference for Women celebrated its 25th anniversary, drawing over 7,500 attendees. The event, themed "Power in Unity," focused on advancing women in the workplace through leadership, career advancement, and personal development.

One of the standout moments was the Keynote Speaker address by Tabitha Brown, Emmy Award-winning actress, au-

thor, and host, delivered an unforgettable keynote address that left the audience deeply inspired. Known for her infectious positivity and delicious vegan recipes, Brown shared her remarkable journey from humble beginnings in North Carolina to becoming a beloved figure in Hollywood. She spoke passionately about the importance of staying true to oneself and following one's dreams, emphasizing that true success comes from being authentic and trusting the inner voice that God has given each of us. "Being obedient to your dreams and being true to your-

self is crucial," Brown affirmed. Her message of embracing one's identity, without the need for code-switching, resonated powerfully with attendees, reminding them that freedom and fulfillment come from being who God created you to be. Brown's heartfelt words and radiant spirit served as a beacon of hope and encouragement, inspiring everyone to pursue their passions with faith and confidence.

Throughout the day, several dozens of the nation's top experts on leadership, career advancement, and personal development took the stage. The

conference's sessions covered a wide range of topics, including strategies for breaking the glass ceiling, balancing work and life, and building supportive professional networks.

In addition to the powerful speeches, the conference offered numerous opportunities for attendees to network and grow. Workshops and breakout sessions provided practical advice on everything from negotiating salaries to leveraging social media for career advancement. The event also featured an exhibition hall where women could connect with potential employers and explore



Tabitha Brown

new products and services designed to support their professional journeys.

The Texas Conference for Women has established itself as the largest conference for women in Texas, and this year's event was a testament to its enduring impact. Over the past 25 years, the conference has continually evolved, addressing the changing

needs and challenges faced by women in the workplace.

The Texas Conference for Women remains committed to empowering women to learn, grow, and support one another. With the enthusiasm from this year's event, the conference is set to continue its legacy of empowerment for many years to come.