

CAROLE KING

"If King...has any notion of her brilliance, she never let on. All she did was smile and, mostly from behind a grand piano, belt out one classic after another in a show that covered five decades in 2 ½ hours." – Washington Post

"King sang and played splendidly, performing with the energy and flair of a teenage as she ran through a significant chunk of the impressive body of work she has crafted over the years." – Chicago Tribune

"She played music-and played it with sheer beauty and class." – Boston Globe

In 2004, Carole King embarked on the *Living Room Tour*, her first in over a decade, and offered her legions of fans an opportunity to glimpse the iconic singer / songwriter in the most intimate of settings. For over two hours each night, she performed songs that drew from her 40 year-plus career, from her early hits, to her overlooked gems, to two new songs? all with acoustic arrangements. King's unique ability to captivate an audience with her compelling voice and expressive piano playing won rave notices from critics and audiences across the country. Now, her new Rockingale Records/Concord Records/Starbucks Hear MusicTM release, documents the magic of the concert dates on *The Living Room Tour*, a 27-song, double CD suffused with King's legendary warmth and wisdom.

If ever an artist has belonged in America's living rooms, it's King. In the 1960s, she and co-writer Gerry Goffin quietly defined a generation with over 50 songs that landed in the Top 40. In 1971, she gave us the landmark *Tapestry*, one of the best-selling and best-loved albums ever made. To date, over 400 Carole King compositions have been recorded by over 1000 artists, resulting in 100 hit singles? many reaching the coveted #1 spot. She is arguably the most successful and most revered female songwriter in pop music history.

King was first inspired to mount the *Living Room Tour* while she and her long-time guitarist Rudy Guess were performing in private homes and small venues for environmental and political events and fundraisers. "I realized I could do the same thing in a large venue and make it feel like a living room," she recalls. "The idea of bringing the show back to basics really appealed to me."

"A lot of people were skeptical: 'How are you going to have an intimate living-room feeling on a big old stage in the theaters and outdoor amphitheaters that you play?'" King says of the initial reaction to the premise, "We just brought furniture with us and set it up in the approximate size of a living room." The concept worked. The San Francisco Chronicle declared, "Songwriter that she is, King sang her greetings to the crowd, an open and witty piece about what her concert was going to be called 'Welcome to My Living Room.' For the next two hours, she did indeed act for all the world like that's where she was and that everybody there was her dear friend. That kind of honest warmth is timeless? and so rare on the concert stage."

"I see the audience as one collective friend," King says in explanation of her remarkably intimate vocals, "and I address my collective friend. I'm sharing things with my friend, and the members of the audience give back. I don't know why it works, but it does."

Lending subtle but solid support on the album are Guess (vocals, guitar and bass), who's been working with King for close to two decades, and Nashville-based songwriter Gary Burr (vocals, guitar, bass, and mandolin), who has co-written a number of songs with her in recent years, including "Loving You Forever," which they sing as a duet on *The Living Room Tour*. The magic on the CD, however, is created by King herself whose performances make the listener believe that she's singing just for them rather than a hall full of people. And, of course, no one can sing Carole King classic songs better than she does.

In all, *The Living Room Tour* CD features King performing 27 of her classic songs, including 7 #1 hits. From "It's Too Late" and "So Far Away," to "I Feel the Earth Move" and "(You Make Me Feel Like A) Natural Woman," she brings to the melodies and lyrics a deep level of familiarity and understanding that the audience embraces. Listening to the album, it's clear that King's music evokes memories of a special time and place, like catching up with a dear, cherished friend. It's hardly surprising then that the timeless classic "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" receives perhaps the warmest and most heart-felt reaction from the crowd. King co-wrote the track, which became a #1 hit for The Shirelles, when she was just 17 years-old. Her own performance of the tune was one of *Tapestry*'s myriad highlights. "When I get to that song, people just shout out, 'Yeah,' and they sing along," she says affectionately.

On a deeper, more personal level, King admits that she enjoys performing live "You've Got a Friend." She is joined by Guess and Burr for what she describes as "a little rotating vocal jam." "I love the moment when Rudy chimes in, 'Carole, you've got a friend," the singer / songwriter smiles. The audience obviously enjoys that moment too, along with the rendition of another familiar tune, "Where You Lead I Will Follow." King reinterpreted this version of the classic tune for the WB TV series "The Gilmore Girls" as a dialogue between a mother and daughter with her own daughter Louise Goffin. The pair shares the stage on *The Living Room Tour* CD for what King describes proudly as, "a really sweet moment."

From the ease of which King connects with her audience and her natural performances, one would probably be surprised to learn that *The Living Room Tour* was the first time she had taken to the road in over a decade. Her date at Radio City Music Hall in July this summer is the native Brooklynite's first appearance in New York City in 12 years. "When I was first starting out," she recalls, "I wasn't sure the audience was going to like me performing, but they did then, and I've sort of gotten in the habit of really just being myself on stage, and I think that's what people respond to. Just come on out and be yourself and play the songs that we all love, and we'll be there for you.' And likewise, I'm there for them."

King's confidence is most evident on the up-beat "Jazzman." "I'm doing that completely by myself; I don't even have Rudy or Gary. I'm just playing all the beats, and I ask the audience to help me by being the drums, and they clap enthusiastically," the singer / songwriter says. "Then, when we get to the sax part, I sing the part. So I just try to be everybody. I love having a band, but this way it's also fun because I can communicate the basic idea, and people respond to that. They're being asked to stretch their imaginations."

While King treats the audience to inspiring renditions of her classic hits, she also showcases her undiminished writing skills with some recent gems, including "Lay Down My Life," "Wishful Thinking" (both from 1993's *Colour of Your Dreams*), and "Love Makes the World" (from 2001's album of the same name). The dramatic potency of these songs elicits a rousing reaction from the audiences. In fact, from *The Living Room Tour*'s first track, "Welcome to My Living Room," to the last, a stunning reinterpretation of "Locomotion" that moves from a slowed down, deeply nostalgic opening to a rousing sing-along climax, King proves that artistry has no expiration date.

One of the things King most enjoyed about the *Living Room Tour* was performing her lyrics and melodies acoustic and raw, as they were first written. These stripped-down performances are the soul of the tour, creating a familiarity that clearly touched the audience. Everyone involved, quite simply, just had a good time. So much so that King is continuing the tour this summer. Given the enduring and universal appeal of the singer / songwriter's music, no doubt the icon will be welcoming new friends into her living room for many years to come.