

GenEc DVD Review

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Amy Winehouse: The Girl Done Good (MVD)

This British documentary DVD came out last year. I decided not to review it at that time, because – quite honestly – I didn't know if I would be writing a review or an obit. Her tabloid-fodder life had sunk that low. Lately, however, she has managed to maintain a surprisingly low profile, which suggests that it may be time for a re-assessment of her career to begin.

“The Girl Done Good” covers Winehouse's music and tempestuous goings-on up to the end of 2007. The first half-plus is devoted to a serious examination of her music, career highlights, stylistic influences. Needless to say, as the film progresses, the story becomes increasingly depressing, as the singer seems hell-bent on squandering her talents and, potentially, her life.

Our story begins with a rather plain, unassuming-looking mid-teenager with normal-looking hair and a voice and style far more mature than her years would warrant. As the people who discovered and nurtured her in these years suggest, she seemed headed for a career as a bluesy jazz singer on the order of Billie Holiday and Dinah Washington (seen in clips which demonstrate their influence on the young Briton). To be sure, such a career path would most likely not have brought her worldwide fame, and one can only speculate how differently her life might have turned out if she had stuck to this road.

Friends, associates, and most telling of all, a few well-chosen British music critics recount her subsequent moves toward soul revivalism. Almost to a person, the interviewees walk the line between worshipful adulation and bewilderment as to the way things turned out. These on-camera experts include three performers who know a thing or two about the ups, downs, pressures and pitfalls that can befall a rising star. Barb Jungr is known as a cabaret performer, but also works behind the scenes as a vocal arranger and educator. Mari Wilson's beehived performance style of the 1980's may have prefigured Winehouse's visual style, but she also knows how quickly hot careers can cool down when the public gets weary of the flavor of the week. Veteran American soul singer, Geno Washington, who is far better known in the UK than at home, has seen his career take a few bounces since the British Invasion era, never reaching the heights his talents deserved.

Winehouse's accomplishments and subsequent excesses are discussed in chronological order. This may be especially instructive for American viewers, since her CD's were not

issued in this country in the order they were recorded. Thus, our view of her musical development has been somewhat distorted by the vagaries of the music business. The DVD includes excerpts from Winehouse's music videos and televised live performances. The more recent performances can be downright depressing, as the emotionalism and vocal skills she displayed in her early jazz performances have all but dissipated. The point is made, though, that she still (as of late 2007) was capable of good days. After seeing the evidence of her self-destructiveness, one can only wonder how. The documentary lasts a packed 78 minutes. Extras include short bios of the contributors and an Amy Winehouse quiz. (My score was adjudged to be "mediocre"). In all, this is a very nicely done package with much well-considered discussion and hardly any fluff.

Posted by Tom Bingham at [10:50 AM](#) 

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