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Rachael Price at the Iowa City Jazz Festival
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Worth the Price: Rachael Channels Ella

One of the reasons I enjoy jazz festivals large or small is the opportunity to hear musicians I would not likely find on my own, at least not so early in their careers. I discovered Patricia Barber at the 2004 Iowa City Jazz Festival and have been a fan ever since. I first heard pianists David Berkman and Bruce Barth in Iowa City, although I was already aware of their music. Last year I was introduced to the very hip Jacob Fred Jazz Odyssey and the stellar chops of trombonist Conrad Herwig. But no unheralded artist has hooked me as quickly as did 20-year-old songstress, Rachael Price. A native of Nashville currently enrolled at the New England Conservatory of Music, Price admitted that this was her first visit to Iowa. She got hooked on jazz early, when she first heard Ella Fitzgerald's rendition of *The Lady is a Tramp* at age five. Maybe this early encounter explains Price's uncanny scatting ability and her sophisticated phrasing skills that caught the ear of Grammy nominee Nnenna Freelon and won accolades when she was the youngest participant in the 2004 Thelonious Monk Vocal Competition.

Price brought a trio of young lions along to Iowa City, including masterful Warren Wolf on piano, Eric Privert on bass, and David Brophy on drums. The repertoire encompassed standards that allowed Price to display a wide range of vocal emotion: *Comes Love*, *Trolley Song*, *Out of This World*, *Stairway to the Stars*, *People Will Say We're in Love*, etc. By the third or fourth tune, she was comfortably scatting like a pro, on *Stairway to the Stars*, on the bridge to *I Only Have Eyes for You*, not overdoing it and not afraid to cut loose. Price also included some less common tunes, *Whisper Not*, *Serenade in Blue*, *You Hit the Spot* (her encore). At times her phrasing the way she would stretch a word or syllable recalled a higher-register Diana Krall, at other times Ella; her voice seemed elastic, her pitch generally true although not as dead-on as Monheit. Yet Monheit at this age, even now, was less inclined to take the chances that propel a great voice into the realm of jazz interpretation. Rachael Price has the confidence and ears of a more seasoned singer. I have no idea what this voice will be like in ten years, but it is both scary and thrilling to wonder.