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JAZZ REVIEW

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## At 20, singer is off to a strong start

By Don Heckman, Special to The Times

Jazz singing is often considered a realm best explored by artists who have seen enough years and played enough emotional games to bring authenticity to their music. The last decade's rush of young performers would seem to belie the truism, but the fact is that most of those identified as the iconic jazz vocalists — Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughan, to name only a few — were well into the adventurous phases of their careers by the time they hit 20.

So it really wasn't all that unprecedented to hear a 20-year-old singer, Rachael Price, perform with such a degree of maturity on Sunday at a fundraiser for the Rising Jazz Stars Foundation in Beverly Hills.

If it wasn't surprising, it was impressive, nonetheless, in the sense that she is clearly a talent with extraordinary potential.

It was apparent, from the start of her first tune — "Comes Love" — that Price had a lot of the pieces in place. Her warm sound and buoyant sense of rhythm carried her smoothly through an upbeat, well-crafted reading, followed by equally dynamic versions of "The Trolley Song" and "People Will Say We're in Love."

Ballads were rendered atmospherically, emphasizing Price's rich, dark tones in standards such as "Serenade in Blue," "Every Time We Say Goodbye" and the bolero "Solamente Una Vez."

And her perky, quick-time rhythms — enhanced by Mike Garson's rhapsodic piano work — were on full display in "You Hit the Spot" and "Love You Madly."

That's a notable collection of standards, and there were numerous others in a program that didn't include any of the music that accompanies the lives of most 20-year-olds. As she becomes more established, more secure in the sense of who she is as an artist, Price would do well to apply her unquestioned skills to the interpretation of more contemporary material — as well as standards.

She also needs to understand that one of the great blessings of youth is the freedom to take chances and, perhaps most important, to remember that — in the best jazz performances — songs are stories with music, sung through the filter of a singer's life.