



MetroMix Cincinnati

Review: Dinner with Jewel

Live concert in a restaurant makes for a cool interactive experience

By Daniele Pfarr



Last night, I had dinner at Morton's Steakhouse Downtown with Jewel. You know, the singer, guitarist, poet?

No seriously. I did. I also got to hear tracks from her new album, "Sweet and Wild" before it was released today. I even got an autographed copy of it.

Okay, okay. I sense some skepticism. Let me explain.

I really did eat dinner at Morton's Steakhouse, and it was delicious. I had a caesar salad, single cut filet, a jumbo lump crab cake, broiled sea scallops wrapped in bacon, sauteed garlic green beans, mashed potatoes and New York cheesecake. Needless to say, my belly was full and happy. Chris, my date, was equally enthusiastic about the dinner. It was the first time I have ever had a crab cake or scallops. Wrap anything in bacon, and I'm all about it.

Before us, hanging from the dark wood-paneled wall, in a private room set up with three small tables, was a large screen. This is where I would eat my dinner and watch Jewel preview her album, live, in Morton's Steakhouses and Maggiano's Little Italy restaurants across the United States.

See? I wasn't lying.

Pittsburgh's Velocity Broadcasting, a high definition television network, brought this First Spin event live to these restaurants in 1080 HD and cinema surround. There were 20 HD cameras on Jewel, and on the Velocity's website (www.velocityboxoffice.com), she promised we'd be able to see every wrinkle. There weren't many, so she was being modest.

So, about this whole "having dinner with Jewel" thing. It felt like we really were. The whole experience was interactive, which means that the viewers got to interact with her before her performance (which was opened by Nashville country act Steel Magnolia) with these little calculator-looking gadgets that sat on the table. She answered fan questions, let us choose her first and last song, and we even got to select which dress she would wear for the performance -- a flowery, flowing number. One lucky fan won an autographed iPad after correctly answering the most questions in largest bout of Jewel trivia to ever happen live. I was impressed with my knowledge. In college, I went through minor obsession with her album, "Pieces of You." I guess the information stuck with me. My "calculator" pooped out on me a couple times, which stunk, because I really wanted that iPad.

Jewel's performance was pretty much what you'd expect from a Jewel performance. She played acoustically with her guitar, performed some older songs ("Foolish Games" and "You Were Meant For Me") and even told a couple of funny stories. That woman has had quite an adventurous life so far.

My main complaint of the night -- she didn't yodel. How is it an official Jewel experience without yodeling?

Overall, This is a really cool concept that could really be used in a variety of ways. For \$100, we got a three course dinner at a fancy restaurant, and a live concert in a cushy, air-conditioned environment.

So, uh, Velocity Broadcasting, any future plans to feature the Black Keys or Band of Horses? I'm down.

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