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# The Jazz Observer



A Newcomer Takes a Look at Jazz

in the Capital District

by Tom Pierce

The Capital District has pleasantly impressed this newcomer from New York City with the quantity, quality, diversity and economy of its Jazz offerings.

Seeing fifteen different bands and eight different vocalists in the past four months, while also noting that as many as 30 Jazz presentations are available on a typical weekend, convinces this reviewer of the abundance here of America's indigenous art form.

The instrumentalists and singers heard consistently maintained a high level of musicianship. This included the many nationally known performers on tour here, such as Bill Chartap, Lavay Smith, Wallace Roney and Rebecca Parris; as well as the exceptional talent based here, such as Colleen Pratt, Sonny & Perley, the Upstate Swing band, John Hilton and Hal Miller, among many others.

Jazz fans are able to choose from the full range of styles: Dixieland, Swing, Jump Blues, Post Bop, Great American Songbook Vocals, Brazilian, Caribbean and Contemporary Smooth Jazz.

Unlike New York City and other major metropolitan areas in the Northeast, Capitol District venues are quite affordable with many free events available, as well as Cover charges being very low or non existent and ample free parking.

Lastly, unlike many cities, good Jazz here can be heard while simultaneously partaking of truly fine cuisine at restaurants such as Justin's, Café Capriccio and the

Shipyard, which are delightful even on nights without music.

## Colleen Pratt, Vocal Treasure

A good example of the quality of what one might see in local venues is Colleen Pratt. She is a Capital District favorite and a delightful treasure. A Jazz vocalist whose effective breadth of styles and material is every bit as remarkable as the passionate feeling with which she imbues every song.

Ms. Pratt is the product of a family of professional musicians (her mother is Jazz singer Helen Pratt.) She inherited and further developed an excellent vocal instrument extending over a wide range with a very resonant timbre and powerful projection. Her lyric sensitivity and subtly, tasteful control are equally outstanding. Commanding poise and warm stage presence ingratiate her to audiences at the many venues she performs.

She also exhibits a significant versatility in comfortably handling straight ahead Jazz, Brazilian music, Rhythm and Blues, contemporary ballads and the Great American Songbook's composers.

She demonstrated all these talents on her two excellent CDs "Ain't Misbehavin'", and "Live at One Caroline". More information can be obtained at [www.colleenpratt.com](http://www.colleenpratt.com)