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AUDIO ANGEL

Petaluma singer Rashida Clendening soars **p20**

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Music



Photo by Philip Pavliger

SING Audio Angel belts it out with backing band member Josh Windmiller.

Live 'Mixtape'

Audio Angel flies and flows **BY MICHAEL GIOTIS**

WHEN I heard about the upcoming show at the Elephant in the Room in Healdsburg, where techno vox Audio Angel will be backed up by members of the definitely non-techno band, the Crux, I knew I needed to learn more.

So I am looking at a little screen glitching a bit to handle the Zoom feed. A radiant human smiles at me through the camera. “Are we starting?” she asks.

“We started,” I assure her. “Let’s go.” Even through our email

exchange, it was clear that words shared between us were bound to be interesting.

Audio Angel—“Rashida Clendening”—perks up, ready to promote her work, to talk music, or just about whatever else life brings her way.

Based in Petaluma, Clendening is a singer with the chops to sound completely at home across not just genres but whole different forms of music, from R&B and drum & bass, to rock and folk.

“So you do write lyrics as well?” I ask, because at the opening of our call, she asked, “How are you feeling?” It is a simple switch from the standard greeting, and

immediately created a connection between us who had only met briefly before. Her way with words has the intentionality and precision that can only come from the mind of a wordsmith. So I already know the answer.

“Absolutely, absolutely,” she says. “That’s one of the first entry points for me; my family has a background in journalism, and so writing and music intersected a lot growing up,” she says. “I used to write as early as I can remember, like, probably when I was like seven or eight, writing songs about the cat.”

I ask, how does one approach such different types of music successfully as a singer.

“I express authentically for [each] genre,” says Clendening. “I’m tuning into what’s happening and getting on board with it. If I don’t love it, there’s no really getting on board with it, especially at this point in my career, which feels really liberating to experience.”

She adds, “If I didn’t express the aggravation and the upset, it would back up. So there’s a real container that drum & bass in particular and most dance music gives me to be like, ‘Fuck!!!’” Clendening is also in a rock band, “so that that’s another place where that rage and sorrow and grief can pour into, and in a really healing way.”

Then there is the current folk-y lineup of Audio Angel, with members of Santa Rosa’s the Crux, whose front person, Josh Windmiller, plays in the band and acts as musical director for the project.

“The live band is almost like a mixtape, because we’re doing a lot of covers... from White Stripes to Erykah Badu to Allen Toussaint.” Throw in some originals and the show promises to be eclectic, mildly electric soul candy.

“[Windmiller] has a key role in helping everything come together,” says Clendening. “I [like] bouncing [musical ideas] off of him while I take the leadership of the bigger vision that I’ve had for decades.” In part, that vision is to play her signature mix of styles with a live band.

Noting the wealth of her musical activity, I say, “You’re grinding.”

“So, I would never use that terminology, but I know where you’re coming from,” she says, sticking to the importance of the right words.

“You are ‘flowing,’” I suggest.

“That’s good; that resonates for sure. And ‘flying.’ You know flying into these situations that feel so right.”

Audio Angel plays at Elephant in The Room Pub, 177A Healdsburg Ave., Healdsburg on Saturday, Nov. 19 at 8pm. Local funk/soul legend Sam Cole opens. \$10.