

JOY LYNN WHITE & DUANE JARVIS, St Bonaventures

Half way through her second set on this long awaited return to Bristol, Joy Lynn White sang a song called *Girls With Apartments in Nashville* about the hoards of female singers who flock to Music City from all over the States with dreams of becoming Country stars.

It is a scenario that would have been only too familiar to her, for it was with just that dream that she herself headed for Nashville on leaving high school in her home state of Indiana.

And last night she showed exactly why she has succeeded where so many others have failed - it's all down to talent. Lots of it.

Joy Lynn White's success has been on two levels. She is an extremely fine songwriter, who has provided hits for a host of country stars, including The Dixie Chicks, and she is also a great singer in her own right.

Unfortunately, her voice was not at its best due to her catching a cold from a passenger on the plane coming over here and, certainly in the first half she kept her vocals a little muted.

On record she has a tendency to always seem at full belt like the archetypal Nashville C&W female singer.

But the more muted tones she felt forced to adopt allowed the emotion that is an inherent part of her voice to shine through, and dropping the key for some of her songs highlighted the richness of her lower register, giving her a much more alt.country sound..

By the second half, fuelled by medication and a couple of whiskeys, she had decided to go for broke and use that stunning, incredibly powerful voice.

And if this is her voice when she is suffering from a cold, you just cannot imagine how big it must be when she is feeling at her best.

On songs like *Love Sometimes, So Full of Love* and the gorgeous *One More Time*, (co-written with Amy Rigby) she showed just why she is so highly rated by her Nashville contemporaries. Not only has she got a big voice but she really knows how to sing.

This she particularly demonstrated on an excellent version of Johnny Cash's classic *I Still Miss Someone* and I do prefer her version of her own song *Tonight The Heartache's On Me* to that which the Dixie Chicks got into the charts.

She also has an endearing stage presence, talking naturally with the audience throughout and without any trappings of the country star that she actually is.

She was aided from the start by her co-star Duane Jarvis, who accompanied

her on most songs and sang as many of his own compositions. Jarvis is one of Nashville's most in-demand session guitarists and plays with enviable versatility, switching styles in almost chameleon-like fashion.

He also has a good rich voice and writes well. I particularly liked *Coulda Shoulda Woulda*, written with Peter Case, *Mandolin Moon* and *Spread My Soul Too Thin*, co-written with the mighty Chuck Prophet whom he has backed and who repaid the favour by backing him on his last album.

Most of the time the nature of the songs and the occasion prompted some pretty restrained playing and Jarvis often seemed a little too reticent.

I couldn't help feeling that often an acoustic rather than an electric guitar might have been more suitable, but when White launched into her second, well deserved encore number, *Good Rockin' Mama*, he was able to really let rip with some storming rock riffs.

Keith Clark * * * (three stars)
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