

Groovin' at the Dosey Doe: Arturo Sandoval and Marc Cohn

Three weeks ago, Yocel and Susan Alonso, Tina, and I went to the country dinner house-cum-music stage, Dosey Doe, which I wrote about when we went there for the first time to hear Tish Hinojosa, a long time favorite of ours, who lives in Europe these days. I am a member of her mailing list/fan club, so when I read that she was coming to Houston, I was there—except I had never heard of the venue, a reconstructed tobacco barn lovingly moved piece by piece from Kentucky to Houston. It is now expanded beyond the Big Barn to a Music Café/nightclub and also a coffeeshop where they serve and sell excellent coffee. If these were in Houston proper, I am certain they would be crowded every night, but they are about 30 miles North of downtown Houston, even past the Intercontinental Airport (I cannot bring myself to call it Bush Intercontinental Airport, any more than I would ever admit flying into Reagan National Airport in DC). Even on a weekend, the traffic patterns make it a schlep, and we were using the HOV much of the way there. Single drivers in cars are just sorry out of luck, especially on a work night.

In any event, once you get there, it is fantastic. They serve dinner in advance of the shows, in a venue with perfect acoustics and serious listeners. And, increasingly important, there are no bad dancers who stand up and get in front of you. For Arturo Sandoval, we sat 7-8 feet away from the stage, and for Marc Cohn, I was 4-5 feet away from him, when he was at the piano. The pictures I have attached do not give enough detail for Posse members to appreciate just how close we were, but I remember only one time I have had a better seat, and that was for the front row of a Sandia Amphitheater James Brown concert, where we were in the front row. I wanted to jump up and put that damned cloak on him myself....

Dinners were great: choices from among a shifting menu of 4-5 entrees, a big salad, and best of all, great desserts and great coffee. Although I do not drink, they had a full wine, beer, and liquor bar. Because they favor country stars, most of the performers stick around afterwards and sign cds they are selling, or pose for pictures. (I have a great picture of Yocel and Sandoval, as well as some friends of his, taken well after the end of the concert.) He played for almost 90 minutes, mostly trumpet, but also piano—which I had never heard him play—and he sang several songs. I thought at the time that he sounded like Herb Alpert, but his voice was less-reedy than Alpert's. In any event, watching the world's best trumpeter (am willing to entertain the case for various Marsalises and especially for Gato Barbieri) in such a perfect venue was quite extraordinary. I recently wrote all of you about him and his role in the Library of Congress tribute to Bacharach and David (who died a few months later), and prepared for the concert by reading about him, especially his apprenticeship with Dizzy Gillespie, and listening to a number of YouTube recordings. One thing was embarrassing: DD had planned two shows, anticipating a bigger jazz and Latino turnout for Sandoval (which they inexplicably kept spelling Sandaval, even on the sign outside that night). But they had to combine them into one, and only about 50-60 people showed up, about 33-40% of capacity. If this great business is to thrive, especially so far out of town, it has to do a much better job of attracting people for the various types of music it presents—

advertising better among Latinos for Arturo Sandoval, better among rock and pop fans for Marc Cohn (about 85-90 people). Somehow, people hear, but I have never seen a print ad, never heard a radio or tv commercial, or seen a flier for any of the wonderful people coming through. They just have to do a better segmented job of getting out the word—as do the Republicans. At least DD is not advocating self-deportation or tax cuts for the wealthy. One other thing—it is very unusual to go to a restaurant in Houston today and not have any people of color as waitstaff. The Woodlands is way the hell out there, but it is a most unusual feeling: just ask Arturo Sandaval??!!
<http://www.doseydoe.com/>

We returned the day after Election Day, this time for Marc Cohn, and again, I drew the long straw and got to sit very close. This is a guy I never knew before the Kevin Costner/Joan Allen movie *The Upside of Anger*, which had *One Safe Place* as the song playing near the end. I waited until the credits all rolled (past the caterer and best boy and grip designations, etc.) and jotted it down, and then his whole world of work opened to me. I vaguely remembered his Grammy Award-winning *Walking in Memphis*, but had not ever seen him perform, which is a real delight, as he has two accompanists, one excellent guitarist and one keyboard guy who alternates on the piano when Marc is playing the guitar or singing at the mike.
http://www.youtube.com/watchv=KK5YGWS5H84&feature=list_other&playnext=1&list=AL94UKMTqg-9CkZXbE5uYBHPiilipYbEGR . His voice and the combo reminds me (we have seen him twice) of my beloved Harry Chapin, who also had no drummer (Cohn uses one intermittently—he had one in New Mexico) and had a cellist who sang falsetto parts; of course, the biggest similarity is the storytelling style and sense of humor both employ(ed) in their songwriting. I recently bought Cohn's newest cd, *Listening Booth: 1970*, an album of covers, but had not realized (despite the title) that they were all from 1970, including *Wild World*, *The Only Living Boy in New York*, *Tears of a Clown*, and *Into the Mystic*. Anyone who channels the then-Cat Stevens, a/k/a Yusuf Islam, Paul Simon, Smokey Robinson, and Van, is going to be among my favorite singers, as my Posse members know. In Houston, where he had not played for so many years that he could not remember he had been there before; the crowd corrected him and reminded him he had played at the old, beloved Rockefeller's, now doing duty as a wedding venue—where Tina and I saw Roy Orbison (about 10 people in the audience), the Fabulous Thunderbirds (about 30 people), and other groups, including the Zombies, with Rod Argent and Colin Blunstone (their original singer). The crowd knew him, and shouted out old songs, encouraged by his asking what they would like to hear. He called it "Request Night at the Dosey Do." By the way, the reason I had not focused on his cd being songs from 1970 was because it included the 1967 "The Letter," by the late Alex Chilton of the Box Tops ("Get me a ticket on an aeroplane, A'int got time to take a fast train.") He acknowledged the timing, and said he wanted to make an album of great songs of the time, which this surely is. One last thing—the night after we saw him in NM, he suffered a bullet shot to the head in a carjacking in Denver. He appears to have recovered fully from it, no doubt nursed by his wonderful wife, the tv reporter Elizabeth Vargas. He and I both married way over our heads—one other thing he and I share—a love of the same singers.

Cohn's opening act was Rebecca Pigeon, a Scottish singer, who has recently released "Slingshot." Her style and mannerisms reminded me of Jewel, and she played guitar and had a backing guitar/singer who was also very good and subtle. He had a breathy style that backed her play beautifully. I kept thinking I had recognized her, and after so many years of movies and concerts, became more certain over the 30-40 minute act that I had seen her before. I then researched her on IMBD, and realized she was the wife of David Mamet, and had appeared in a number of his movies and plays, most notable Oleanna, a great off-Broadway play we saw, that was later made into a movie, for which she had written the score. She also had regular roles in the tv shows The Unit and The Shield, and an important role in The Spanish Prisoner, the great Mamet movie. The Spanish Prisoner is among my favorite Mamet movies (along with House of Games), and starred Steve Martin, Ben Gazzara, Felicity Huffman, and Campbell Scott—and the Mamet regular, the magician Ricky Jay, whose act I have seen several times.

Having her as an opening act was something of a yin and yang for the evening, as she has a very soft and smooth style, whereas Cohn is very animated and has a loud rock and roll voice—try him on YouTube and you will see what I mean. There is about an hour and half of him on YT, and it is well worth it, both his own clever work and his very interesting covers; try one of the several choices of The Only Living Boy in New York, and tell me what you think. Paul Simon must love it when someone really talented does one of his great songs.

That is it from Dosey Doe for now—we will be back in New Mexico for December and so will miss Janis Ian (At Seventeen, Society's Child, etc), and I hope to see Don McLean there in the Spring. After the semester, I will write once more to summarize the year, but if I do not, I wish all my Posse happy holidays and good grading periods, d/b/a December.

Michael

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