

Janiva Magness

The woman who almost gave up singing the blues.

Janiva Magness is a star on the rise. Recently named Contemporary Female Artist of the Year at the Blues Music Awards, and touring behind *Do I Move You*, a sizzling CD of some of her most riveting work yet, she is finally getting some of the recognition she so richly deserves.

Speaking by phone from her home in Los Angeles, Magness laughed about the recent attention. "It's an overnight success, where the night is 31 years long," she said. "That's how long I've been at it, but yes, things are going pretty good right now."

Her voice, so powerful on record, was a little hoarse as we spoke, probably the result of a grueling weekend. "It's going to be a very busy summer," she said. "This past weekend we did two blues festivals, a club

date, and I did a House of Blues Radio Hour."

Trying to commiserate, I suggested that all that passionate singing must have taken a lot out of her, but she instantly objected. "Music doesn't take from me," she said, wanting to make that point crystal clear. "The music is energizing, it gives to me. It's all the rest, the other stuff, that is tiring."

The other stuff she is referring to is the business, the stuff that's not singing. The stuff you have to go through in order to make music. Much earlier in her career, it got so bad she tried to give up singing and the business, just drop it like a bad relationship.

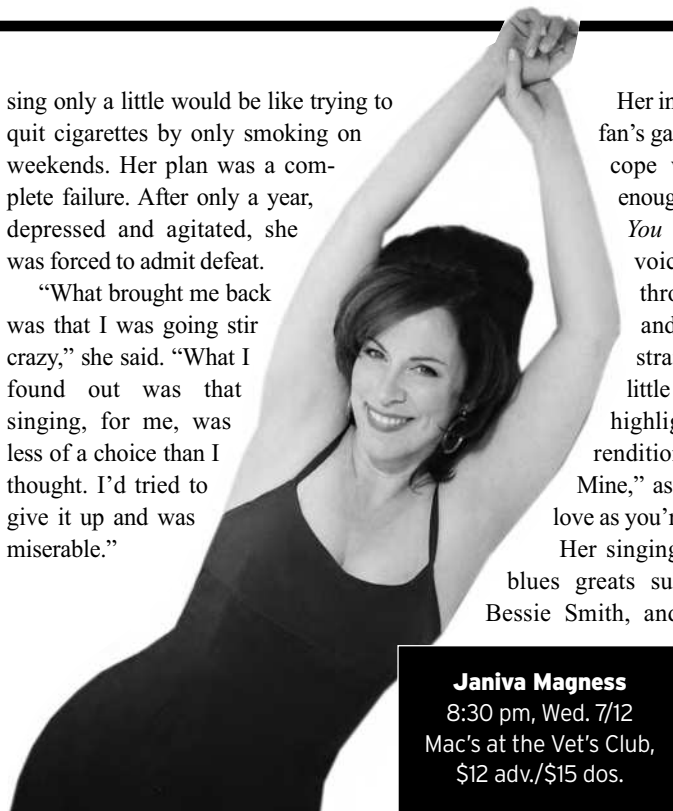
"It's a rough business," she said. "After awhile I didn't want to deal with it." She entered the workaday world, trying to quit cold turkey, seeing it as an all-or-nothing deal. To

sing only a little would be like trying to quit cigarettes by only smoking on weekends. Her plan was a complete failure. After only a year, depressed and agitated, she was forced to admit defeat.

"What brought me back was that I was going stir crazy," she said. "What I found out was that singing, for me, was less of a choice than I thought. I'd tried to give it up and was miserable."

Her inability to quit is the blues fan's gain. At 50, she's learned to cope with the business well enough to survive. *Do I Move You* takes Janiva's versatile voice on musical side trips through Mississippi Delta and Chicago style blues, straight R&B and maybe a little country swing blues. The highlight is her heartbreaking rendition of "You Were Never Mine," as sad a tale of unrequited love as you're likely to find.

Her singing has been compared to blues greats such as Etta James and Bessie Smith, and blues novices should know that if you like Bonnie Raitt, you will also like Janiva Magness.



Janiva Magness
8:30 pm, Wed. 7/12
Mac's at the Vet's Club,
\$12 adv./\$15 dos.

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