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Weekend Arts I

Rocking Out in a Place Known for Reserve

Early in her Café Carlyle show on Wednesday evening, Lena Hall produced a tambourine and remarked that she might be the first performer to shake such an instrument in this

STEPHEN HOLDEN

MUSIC REVIEW

staid cabaret, which until recently had avoided booking rock performers. But appearances there by Debbie Harry and Buster Poindexter, who have done good business, have signaled that the walls are crumbling.

Ms. Hall, who won a Tony in 2014 for her portrayal of Yitzhak in the Broadway revival of "Hedwig and the Angry Inch," is an all-out rocker in the Robert Plant vocal tradition with strong echoes of Heart's Ann Wilson. Paradoxically she exhibited the discipline of a Broadway performer who doesn't miss a note. Despite the feral cries that came out of

Lena Hall performs through April 18 at the Café Carlyle, 35 East 76th Street, Manhattan; 212-744-1600, thecarlyle.com.



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Lena Hall *The actress and singer covered songs old and newish at the Café Carlyle on Wednesday.*

her, at no point in her show did you feel that she was pushing the boundaries and surrendering control. The personality behind the wild woman pose was polite but warm.

Therein lies the contradiction of rocking out in New York's most elegant supper club. As uninhibited as a performer pretends

to be, the gracious environment in which well-dressed patrons play kissy-kissy serves as a behavioral brake. Her excellent band, led by Watt White on guitar and featuring John Deley on keyboards, Lee Nadel on bass and Brian Fishler on drums, played music that was impeccably arranged but scaled down.

Eardrums would not be shattered. There was not the remotest possibility of clothes being shed and tables overturned.

The far-reaching program concentrated on songs associated with the likes of Jack White, Led Zeppelin, Tori Amos, Talking Heads, Queen, Nirvana, Elton John, David Bowie, Paul McCartney, Hozier and Erykah Badu. For the quietest selection, the Blind Faith ballad "Can't Find My Way Home," Ms. Hall peeled off the rough vocal edges to adopt a sweeter sound, but the plaintive wail of Steve Winwood's original vocal was absent. For all her attitude, Ms. Hall conveyed little strong emotion beyond a desire to demonstrate an impressive vocal expertise.