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Rita Wilson debuts at the Cafe Carlyle

An appealing evening of easy-listening pop features songs she co-wrote.

BY JOE DZIEMIANOWICZ



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MICHAEL WILHOITE

Rita Wilson's show at the Cafe Carlyle through Oct. 4 showcases songs she co-authored.

Rita Wilson's ear-tickling debut at the Cafe Carlyle begins with an invitation.

"Roll the windows down," she urges with playful gusto. "Come along for the ride."

A recurring theme during Wilson's cabaret ride at the popular club is taking risks — or not. Crushing self-criticism, which Wilson copped to on Wednesday, will slow anyone down.

"How long did it take you to get here tonight?" she asks a patron seated near the stage. "Well, it took me decades."

Meet Rita 2.0. Because what makes this evening more special for Wilson, an actress and producer who's done cabaret elsewhere before, is that she's singing her own songs.

Accompanied by an ace four-man band, Wilson premieres 13 numbers. She co-wrote them with various collaborators for an album coming in 2015.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/rita-wilson-debuts-cafe-carlyle-article-1.1952736>

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The appealing baker's dozen falls comfortably into the category of easy-listening pop. The tunes showcase Wilson's pleasant, slightly husky voice, which at times summons Sheryl Crow and Shawn Colvin.



MICHAEL WILHOITE

Rita Wilson is joined on stage at Cafe Carlyle by pianist Alex Nevarro, bass player Lee Nadel, music director and guitarist Andrew Doolittle and drummer Rich Mercurio.

What You See Is What You Get" (written with Shari Short and Bryan Todd) and "Girls Night In" (Nathan Chapman and Stephanie Chapman) make for breezy upbeat diversions.

Between a driving beat and insistent message, "In the Dark" (with Ron Aniello and Jason Wade) has many in the room shimmying in their seats. Heart-on-sleeve "Grateful" (Kara DioGuardi and Jason Reeves) is an emotional high.

Wilson's show includes a few songs from "AM/FM," her 2012 album of vintage hits. Like a GPS, she locates the precise achy core of Dave Loggins' "Please Come to Boston."

The evening ends like it began — with an original song she sends out as an air kiss to the whole audience, which includes husband Tom Hanks.

"I'm guilty of loving you," she sings.

Rita Wilson at the Cafe Carlyle (35 E. 76th St.) through Oct. 4. \$50 and up at; (212) 744-1600.