

## **Opie Bellas**

Bella Blue Music  
3752 Fruitvale Ave  
Oakland, CA 94602  
510/336-9509  
<http://www.opiebellas.com>  
email: [booking@opiebellas.com](mailto:booking@opiebellas.com)

### **Contra Costa Times**

#### **Jazz Singer Back on Home Turf After African Tour**

Sometimes it feels like the Bay Area's primary export is music, particularly vocalists who perform all over the world but infrequently play at home. Opie Bellas, a Bay Area treasure, makes a rare hometown appearance on Monday at Yoshi's, having recently returned from a repeat engagement in Cape Town.

She made the South African connection unexpectedly two years ago when a music promoter e-mailed her, looking for a stylish singer well-versed in the American Songbook. She played a series of gigs around Cape Town in the fall of 2004, and returned last winter to a whole new cadre of fans. She's looking forward to future South African adventures, having forged close connections with some of the city's best jazz musicians, including veteran bassist Basil Moses, who's recorded with South African jazz legends such as Abdullah Ibrahim and Sathima Bea Benjamin.

"When you're a traveling musician, especially a singer, there's always a moment when you're holding your breath, thinking 'What have I gotten myself into?'" said Bellas from her home in Oakland. "The band turned out to be as good as any I've ever worked with. They infuse their African sensibility, playing these rhythms that naturally meld into the jazz arrangements. I love those kinds of experiences, because when they work, it's thrilling."

For her performance at Yoshi's, Bellas plays with her regular, top-shelf Bay Area band, featuring pianist David Udolf, guitarist Brad Buethe, bassist Chris Amberger and drummer Wally Schnalle. Bellas says she'll be focusing on material for her four albums, particularly last year's excellent "Faces," but she's also developed some new pieces. Most interesting is a tune by the powerful Greek pop singer Haris Alexiou, which marks Bellas' first foray in her ancestral language.

"I was in Greece last summer and I heard this incredible song playing that caught my ear," Bellas said. "I jotted down the melody and I went to record stores and hummed it,

and I actually was able to find the CD."

Details: Shows are 8 and 10 p.m. Monday. Tickets are \$6 (late show) and \$10. Contact 510-238-9200 or [www.yoshis.com](http://www.yoshis.com)

**Andrew Gilbert**  
**Contra Costa Times**  
**2006**