

CABARETSCENES

Ashford & Simpson

Feinstein's at Loews Regency
New York, NY



It's almost four decades later and Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson don't look very much older, nor do they sound much different. What's the secret? Must be all the song hits they've written and the shows performed around the world that keep them young and vital. And there's no doubt that they are! As they took the stage at Feinstein's, there couldn't be a hotter rock couple with as much soul, love and sophistication as Nick in black satin suit and Val in black short-fringe sparkle dress. "It'll Come, It'll Come" and it does. They just make it happen as every lyric and movement count, polished beyond diamond brightness.

Meeting in the Choir of Harlem's Rock Baptist Church in 1964, they scored their first songwriting hit in 1966 when Ray Charles shot to the top of the charts with their "Let's Go Get Stoned." The ride was a little bumpy until they signed on with Motown writing hits for Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, Aretha Franklin, as well as many other performance stars. This show is all about those hits. The rock ballad "Is It Still Good to Ya?" concerns couples who have been together a long time and is sung with powerful expression by Mr. Ashford, along with "Stay Free," dedicated to the single folks, producing goose bumps listening to his falsetto. To change the pace and show off her multi-talents, Val slides onto the piano bench to accompany Nick on "I'm Your Man," which becomes even more sexual when he removes his jacket revealing the little black sparkling tank top! The heat is on! His voice is fluidity itself with a gospel cry. Her response, "I'm Every Woman" as she takes center stage.

Ashford & Simpson have been writing the score for a musical based on E. Lynn Harris's novel *Invisible Life*. FA song from the show, "Bullet," is about a young man confused with his sexual identity: "I don't know what's gonna happen when the bullet leaves the gun." This was followed by "Born This Way," presented by guest artist Terry Lavelle, at least seven feet tall and thin as a string bean in a black leotard, who whisked into the room to sing and dance this spectacular piece.

Closing out the evening with some of their greatest hits: "You're All I Need to Get By," "Reach Out and Touch," "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" and "Solid," it's obvious that getting older means getting better for this husband-wife team! The band is filled with the same high level: Bernard David – drums/percussion; Eluriel Barfield – bass; Pete Cannarozzi – piano; Valerie Ghent – keyboard/vocals and Clayton McNair – vocals. "Cure" says it all: "don't take no medicine, take a little of +this."

They appear thru at Feinstein's through September 20th.

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