



Jason Shannon CD Release with Wars of 1812 and Molly Maher at The Varsity Theater on 1/9/09

By: [Donette Ambrosy](#)



Jason Shannon - Photo by [Jenn Barnett](#)

Jason Shannon has been, of late, the underground darling of the Minneapolis music scene, and for good reason. While the self-described "American Soul" singer may not embody the connotation some have of "soul" music, the "soulfulness" of his singing and overall stage persona are simply undeniable.

The almost-bursting-at-the-seams full house attending Shannon's CD release party for his self-titled album at the Varsity on Friday night was driven wild by his boundless energy, and impassioned delivery. The ever-humble Shannon seemed to be genuinely caught off-guard by the size of the crowd, commenting on it several times in a sheepishly excited way.

Shannon's group was impeccably-dressed; the men were veritable dandies in neatly pressed shirts & trousers with shimmering silk ties. The male audience members swooned for gorgeous violinist **Wendy Tangen-Foster**, who was the picture of hip elegance in a cocktail dress paired with to-be-reckoned-with biker boots. Shannon, for his part, was a lady-killer, channeling Cubanismo swank in an all-black suit topped with a fedora and white tie.

I'd had the good fortune of catching Shannon's raw acoustic performance at the Mad Ripple Hootenanny on January 1st, which whet my curiosity for this full-ensemble show. I was not disappointed. The group generates a remarkably robust sound by way of keys, strings, and a horn layered over guitar & bass, with two percussionists. Shannon's stage persona shifted substantially for this performance as well; his confidence flourished as he owned the stage.

Trumpet and keys give Shannon's music a predominately Chicago blues style of sound; however, early in the set, I was pleasantly surprised by a segment of Caribbean-influenced songs, including the bouncy & reggae-ish "All I Want Is You" and the lovely, down-tempo "Slow Down Love."



Wendy Tangen-Foster - Photo Barnett

Jason Shannon's voice is, in a word, flawless. I found myself marveling at his perfect vocal clarity and control, adjusting his timbre effortlessly to accommodate the wide range of musical territory covered in the evening.

Shannon wrapped up the set with a segment of songs showcasing his sense of humor. The already wound-up audience went crazy for the off-color "The Carpet Don't Match the Curtains," as well as the up-tempo blues number "Mighty, Mighty River," which poses the eyebrow-raising question, "...can I put my dickory / down in your dockery?"

Shannon and his stellar 7-piece band were the crown jewel in what proved to be an amazingly well-thought-out, cohesive bill

with **The Wars of 1812, Molly Maher & Erik Koskinen.**

Preceding Shannon were the Wars of 1812, whose short-and-sweet set gained a warm reception from their ever-increasing fan base. I'd seen the Wars of 1812 at the Turf Club in June of '08 and found it refreshing to see them really open up in this larger venue.

Frontman **Peter Pisano** forewent his usual suiting in favor of a more grassroots look of cardigan and stocking cap. This, and his accessible, heartfelt (at times, self-deprecating) lyrics and **Jeff Tweedy**-esque vocal style made me want to, well...give him a hug. The set was largely on the down-tempo side, but plenty energetic. I particularly enjoyed Pisano's vocal experimentation and the doo-wop sing-along quality of "Begging You." I would like to see a bit more of this from The Wars of 1812 in the future, as it adds an interesting layer to the brooding.

Erik Koskinen kicked things off solo, then continued on with Molly Maher and Her Disbelievers, whose southern-tinged rock and authenticity greatly contributed to setting the mood for the entire evening.

Jason Shannon Set List:

Sons & Daughters
Mr. Miracle Mile
All I Want is You
Slow Down Love
Chained
Trouble in the World
Can't Erase Love
Long Lost Friend
Blood in Our Eyes
How Long?
The Carpet Don't Match the Curtains
Mighty Mighty River
In the Light There are No Shadows