



Nigel Reynolds Saturday Premiere



Katriona Taylor found her sultry voice at drama school after leaving her job in the law

Katriona follows her heart to find harmony in jazz

IT would be pushing it to say that a new star was born. But something a little special did occur this week at the Pizza on the Park, one of London's best jazz spots.

By the end of her two-hour performance, Katriona Taylor, had her 100-plus audience eating out of her hand. They rose to their feet, demanded an encore and the singer knew that she had come through the biggest night of her life with flying colours.

Katriona is the 31-year-old daughter of the tennis player Roger Taylor, the last Englishman to appear in a Wimbledon semi-final before Tim Henman, and the current Great Britain Davis Cup captain.

Katriona is also registered blind and was until two years ago a well-paid solicitor working in Fleet Street for the American law firm Dechert. Bored and terrified at the prospect of wasting her life submerged in the detail of copyright law, she made the bold decision to chuck it in, and go to drama school.

There, during a one-year diploma at London's Central School of Speech and Drama, she discovered to her surprise that she had a voice and decided

to become a jazz singer. As a child, sport not music had been her life. She didn't progress beyond Grade II in piano and, when she was only seven, the onset of a genetic condition causing the cells in her retinas to deteriorate meant she never learnt to read music.

She says: "I am not foolish enough to think that I'm going to be a star overnight but when I looked at what life as a lawyer would be like in the next 20 years, I thought God, is that it? Everybody around me said I was mad to change and I suppose I followed my instincts in a very un-lawyer like way. But I knew that life was too short to be miserable."

She describes her voice, with a little embarrassment, as "sultry, soft and soothing" but she was pleased to discover that she has a range of 3½ octaves allowing her a wide repertoire. She goes for Norah Jones and Barbra Streisand songs, but also contemporary jazz and standards from the 1920s.

"The theory of jazz is horribly complicated and because improvising is all, it is really quite intellectual and sophisticated. That's stimulating and challenging and I love it."