

She's just plain folk

interview by Gilbert Bouchard

"I write political satire," said Edmonton based singer Bev Ross. "I was in the show *Is Nothing Sacred Anymore?* for which I wrote all the songs, and I do some political material in my show."

"I don't write strictly for feminists. I am a feminist, and I am a woman, but my music isn't Madonna's."

What she does call her music is contemporary folk, "but a lot of real folk singers would be appalled to hear me call it folk."

Ross sings and plays a synthesizer and her back up band plays the electric guitar and bass. "It's not acoustic music with acoustic guitars and fiddles but it relates well to folk audiences because it goes past simple girl meets boy," she said.

The music on her first album *Leap of Faith* is smooth and simple — she doesn't hide her voice or her lyrics behind any extraneous instrumentation — and her care and devotion extends past her recordings into her live performances.

"I think you have to choose your audience. I play in some communities where I would not feel comfortable playing some of my own material," Ross said. "You have to be aware of your audience and what they want. You have to be careful not to alienate them."

Ross was born and raised in Edmonton and graduated from the U of A with a B.A. in English and music, and even though she's been tempted she's never left Alberta. "I haven't left. I've thought of leaving several times but I've always found work or fallen in love and ended up staying," she said. "This city has a lot of opportunities in the theatre and music scene. It's pretty vibrant."

While she's Edmonton based, Ross tours all over Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan. "I play festivals, clubs, and concerts in communities of every size."

She's also independently promoting her first album through her own record company. *Leap of Faith* is available at SUB records,

Marquee Records, Sound Connection, Free Cloud, Aspen Books, and Common Woman Books."

Another of Ross' projects is a special benefit concert this Saturday night and Provincial Museum for the Celebration of Women in the Arts.

"Celebration of Women in the Arts is women from every discipline who are interested in improving the profile of women in the arts," said Ross. "I was initially involved in the organization in 1982-83 when they put on a festival — I was on the music committee."

Ross describes the arts situation in general as being "pretty grim", with women being hit with a "double whammy". Celebration of Women in the Arts is trying to help change the attitudes surrounding women in this field.

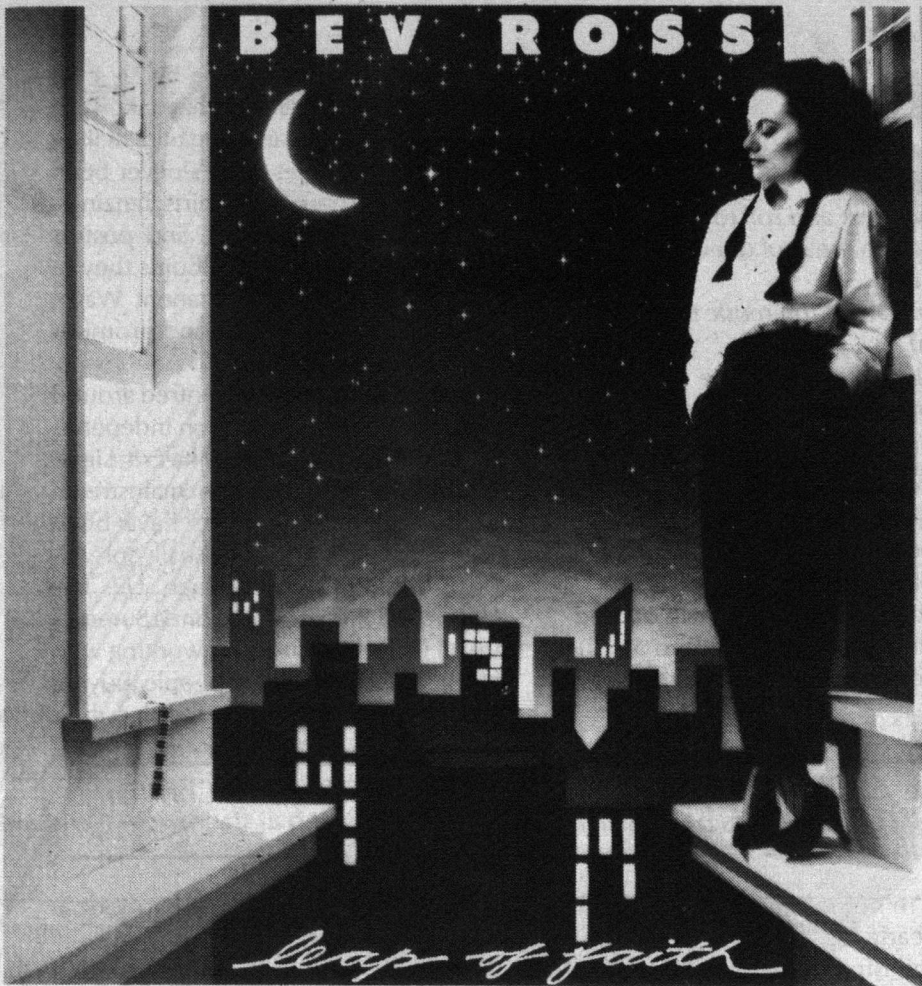
"It's hard for women to give top priority to their art over their private life, and that is understandable because of how we have been raised," said Ross. "Probably every woman who works outside the house gets this kind of guilt." She also added that women artists are often working at three endeavors at once: their art careers, an outside job in a non-art related field, and a full-time caregiver.

She also thinks that women often lack the experience that men have in promoting their skills.

"I do think that at a certain level men are much more practiced at getting grants," she said. "Most heads of music organizations are men and in theatre many plays call specifically for men."

Ross' field, the music establishment, fares just as poorly. "In the music industry, even though it may be changing, women are still the exception."

The cutbacks to the arts and culture and the scarcity of women performers isn't deterring Ross. In fact, she's branching out. Ross was originally a freelance writer until she decided to devote more time on her



music and make it her focus. Now she's starting to do more work in the theatre.

"I've been involved in a number of theatrical events but I have never acted before" she said. Ross made her debut in Theatre Network's *Is Nothing Sacred Anymore?* earlier this month.

"This was also the first time I've written songs for a play and not just the music. It's nice writing songs for the stage. You know

that people are listening carefully because it means something. Often people will play a record and not even hear the words."

Ross will be playing at the Provincial Museum this Saturday, March 16. Tickets are \$7 and are available at Common Woman Books, Sub Box Office, Wienlos Books, and at the door. All proceeds are going to Celebration of Women in the Arts.

Bilingual play to open

story by Gilbert Bouchard

Edmonton's French language theatre, Le Theatre Francais d'Edmonton, is hosting a theatre festival this weekend featuring *Circulations*.

Produced by the Theatre Repere from Quebec, *Circulations* was the winner of the Best Canadian production at last year's International Theatre Festival in Quebec. Not only was the show a hands down winner of the festival, it was also a critical success — both in the French and English press.

The play is a show of motion, sound and image. It is one-third in French, one-third in English and one-third in motion to make the whole show accessible to any audience regardless its mother tongue.

Circulations is about a young girl quitting her job and travelling to New York and com-

ing to grips with her past and future. The action is wild and the theatre is experimental. *Circulations* allows Edmontonians a glimpse at the cutting edge of French-Canadian theatre. *Circulations* plays Mar. 14 and 15 at 3 p.m. and Mar. 16 at 8 p.m.

Other productions include: *Ionescam-ment Votre* from the Faculte St. Jean theatre group; *Mon Chateau*, a collective creation by the J.H. Picard High School theatre group; and Moliere's *Le Malade Imaginaire*, presented by the Societe de Theatre de Calgary.

Also a part of the program is *Les Bucherons*, a concert of traditional and original songs and stories by Gilbert Parent and Yves Manseau.

For tickets and more information, contact Le Theatre Francais d'Edmonton at 8406-91 St., ph. 469-0829.

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