

"Coming soon to a beaver foods outlet near you... Sue Medley unplugged."



by Lilith

Sue Medley called me from Nashville, where she was nursing a sore throat brought on from laying outdoors for the Winterlude festival in Ottawa on one of the coldest nights of the year. She is in the middle of a tour coming to U.N.B. Fredericton February 16, which features performances that are totally acoustic. Medley is accompanied on the tour by guitarist and songwriter partner Billy Crain, rather than a full backup band. While she took a full band on tour as an opening act for Tom Cochrane and Kim Mitchell, Medley indicated that there were a variety of reasons for deciding to take a minimalist approach to her stage show. Financial and logistical factors were a consideration, she explained, because "It was becoming too much of a headache, when there's that many people involved. The expenses are unbelievable... it costs a lot of money to keep a band out on the road. I decided 'it's time to try something different, because I'm starting to not enjoy this'." Acoustic performance also represented a return to her roots, as she had started out on stage with "just my guitar and my voice." Medley says that she has been getting positive feedback from the shows and is

pleased with the format because "it gives people a chance to really hear my voice. With the band, you kind of get buried..." The format also "presents the songs and my voice in their truest form," or in the way that she composes them. Medley is currently based out of Nashville, Tennessee, where she lives part-time when she's not on tour or in the process of recording. Although originally from Courtenay, B.C., the year and a half before the completion of her most recent polygram album *Inside Out*, was a nomadic existence, as she was either constantly on tour or working on the album. Nashville serves as a place she can go to relax and write, because "for a year and a half it was suitcases and hotel rooms... it's nice to have a place where I can put a few pictures up on the wall. *Inside Out* was recorded primarily at John Mellencamp's Belmont Mall studio in Bloomington, Indiana, but additional recording and mixing took place at studios in New York, Vancouver, Lake Geneva (Wisconsin), Nashville and Prince's Paisley Park Studios in Minneapolis. Part of the reason for the album's multi-located creation was scheduling time with producer Mike Wanchic and mu-

sicians Kenny Aronoff and David Grissom, all members of John Mellencamp's band, who were needed on Mellencamp's *Whenever We Wanted* tour.

Sue described her surroundings in Nashville as a vital music community, but don't assume that she's hanging out with Garth Brooks and Loretta Lynn. While most people automatically associate Nashville with country music, Medley says "there's a real healthy rock and roll-blues-alternative scene down here... it's a whole other side of Nashville that's very hip... that most people don't realize is there. It's just the same way as people coming to Canada and thinking that we live in igloos. They think everybody down here has a cowboy hat."

The environment in Nashville agrees with her, apparently. When I asked about her songwriting process, Sue explained that while she works very sporadically, "Once I get started, it usually turns into a roll and I can do it on a daily basis... Sometimes I'll go a couple of months and not able to write a thing." However, she has had a productive period lately, producing a lot of new material in the past few months, some of which she promises to include in her show. Most of the new material she describes as "having a real edge to

it," most comparable to "Dangerous Times," from her self-titled debut album.

Medley's association with John Mellencamp's band led to her participation in the tribute to Bob Dylan at New York's Madison Square Gardens in October. Medley had opened for Dylan on the Ontario dates of his last tour, but her invitation to perform at the "Bob-fest" came because one of Mellencamp's back-up vocalists was unavailable. Medley characterizes the experience as "the highlight of my career." The event brought together dozens of stars to salute Dylan, and backstage at the Gardens, Medley shared a dressing room with Ron Wood of the Rolling Stones, Stevie Wonder, the Clancy Brothers and the Mellencamp band.

Medley cites Neil Young as one of the major influences on her style, along with Little Feat, Bonnie Raitt and Joni Mitchell. Although she didn't have the opportunity to meet Young at the Dylan tribute, where he also performed, when I ask her who she would most like to perform with, she responded quickly with Neil Young's name. She also says the classic albums from her early influences are still the mainstay of her current listenings. Among more recent records she cites Cajun slide-guitar genius Sonny Landreth, who played on *Inside Out*.

Although Medley co-produced her most recent album with an American, some of the musicians were American and the production of the album took place mostly in the U.S., all of the songs on *Inside Out* met the Canadian Radio-Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) guidelines for Canadian content, which evaluate songs based on the nationality of the writers of the music and lyrics, the artist and the producer. These regulations recently created a controversy when some of the material from Bryan Adams' last album were ruled non-Canadian because of his collaboration with British and American producers and co-writers. While Medley acknowledges that the regulations have for the most part been very helpful to her, she says that "Canadians should be able to work with people from other countries on our records and still qualify as a Canadian record... there are certain cases that they should look at and loosen up the rules a bit." The 30% Canadian content requirement for most stations does not mean that "they're just playing anything, even if it sounds bad... there's a lot of competition and a lot of good Canadian music."

Creative control is a major issue for Medley, and in addition to writing or co-writing all of her songs and co-producing, she tries to remain involved in every aspect of her career. She says that "It's hard enough to maintain your identity, because things get put out through the media-pictures or something-that doesn't quite represent you... It's important, because I'm the only one who really knows what's right for me, in the final decision."

Medley plans to eventually tour the U.S. and Europe and says that she will likely stick with the acoustic format, in order to introduce herself to European concert audiences. Her new songs will appear on her third album, predicted for release this summer or in early fall. Her first album *Sue Medley* has reached gold status (50,000 copies sold) and *Inside Out* is approaching gold. A taste of her acoustic work is available on five song E.P., also entitled *Inside Out*. Tickets for the February 16 concert at the S.U.B. cafeteria are available at the Help Centre in the S.U.B. or at the Student Union Office, with ticket prices of \$12 for students and \$14 for non-students. Montreal band I.C. Red is featured as the opening act.

Tonight!!!

At 8:00 pm on Friday, February 12th at the New Brunswick Filmmakers' Co-operative, there will be a screening of Michael Jones short films. This will begin a weekend workshop on writing and directing for dramatic films by Mr. Jones.

Michael Jones helped found the Newfoundland Independent Filmmakers Co-operative in 1975. His early work at NIFCO includes *Dolly Cake*, *Cod-pieces* and *Sisters of the Silver Scalpel*. His first feature film, co-written and directed with his brother Andy (of CODCO fame) was *The Adventures of Faustus Bidgood*. He has acted in two Bill MacGillivray films, *Aerial View* and *Stations*. Recently he has shot several short films with titles like *Outport Lesbian*, *Grannies* and *Ship Inn Man*. *Secret Nation* is his most recent feature film.

While in Fredericton, he will be present at the premiere of *Secret Nation*, where he will introduce the film. This screening takes place February 15th at 8:00 pm at Le Centre Communautaire Ste-Anne as part of the Capital Films regular film series. *Secret Nation* is a taut, archly observed conspiracy drama about just how and why the former independent British colony of Newfoundland became Canada's tenth province.

Fed up with everything (including her Quebecois boyfriend, Denis), Newfoundland history student, Frieda Vokey, thirty-five, returns home from Montreal with a deadline: finish her Ph.D. thesis on Newfoundland nationalism now, or forget it. But history at home is not the mouldy matter she might have expected. The death of crooked politician, Leo J. Cryptus, whose personal papers could hold a wealth of damning information, has the local historians buzzing. Rumours abound of British treachery during the Newfoundland Confederation Debate of confederate spies in the independence camp, of improprieties during the referendum which led to the yoking of Newfoundland to the Canadian interests in 1949. A film not without relevance to recent happenings in Canada.

Michael Jones' workshop at the Co-op will consist of viewing and discussing films he has done, discussing participants scripts, and acting out scenes from selected works. The workshop begins Friday evening and carries through to Sunday afternoon. For further information, contact the New Brunswick Filmmakers Co-operative. All workshops are open to members and the general public.