

## ENTERTAINMENT

## Siberry: Panoramic, original

by Suzette C. Chan

Jane Siberry's music is hard to define.

Panoramic because she juxtaposes complex images against stark backgrounds? Ethereal because it is light and clean? Hypnotic because of the intricate musical structure? Laurie Anderson because of the ironic, witty lyrics? Joni Mitchell because the music touches folk, jazz and pop?

Or how about "original, lyric-oriented with modern instrumentation?" That's how Jane Siberry describes her music.

Invited to brag about herself, she declines. "No, no I won't do that," she laughs. "You could probably do a better job describing it than I can."

The Toronto singer sounds a little uncomfortable in a rapid-fire interview situation, but you would think she was used to it by now.

Siberry has been the subject of glowing reviews and adulatory articles since her second album was released this spring. *No Borders Here* marked a transition from folk music (what Siberry calls "solo performing") to a bright, new, high-tech style.

"It was a natural progression," says Siberry of the change in musical styles. "Often, as a solo performer, you don't know enough about arrangements. The more people I added, the more I learned, so I had to learn how to write my songs differently."

Siberry's songs have a strong lyric base which grabs audiences first and most.

"My lyrics are not too personal. I think people are often too personal with their lyrics, not removed enough."

She writes on a variety of subjects. "I'm attracted to abstract ideas, things I find funny, fads - just things that are interesting."

When asked to hint at the meaning of one of her lyrics, Siberry delines. "It took me five minutes to get it into a song."

She asks me what I think "Dancing Class"

means and I say something about silent relationships people establish with intriguing acquaintances. She approves it as a plausible interpretation.

"That was not a factual moment, but I find it moving myself. There's a lot poignancy there: the matrix between the facts - maybe that's what you're hearing."

Siberry would like her music to be as "accessible as possible" although she says, "I don't think I want to become a household name."

Even with sold-out performances across the country, opening slots for Bruce Cockburn and Joe Jackson and an album fast approaching gold status, Siberry says she was not wholly surprised by her success.

"I was glad about it, but the change in record companies makes a big difference." (Siberry's first LP, *Jane Siberry* was an independent release.)

"With a certain amount of promotion, you can expect a certain amount of sales," she says. "But mostly it's been steady, word-of-mouth - which pleases me."

As part of her promotion and now her success, Siberry has toured across Canada and in the U.S. with a tight-knit band.

"It's a five-piece band, but I'm not bringing the Fairlight (the super synthesizer that produces faithful, clean sounds on *No Borders Here*), so we'll have some tapes."

The distinctive layered harmonies that grace her album will also be absent. "We have other things and we change things around a bit."

Siberry says she is happy with her live shows "when I myself feel like I was doing my best. What really bugs me is when I feel removed, not really relating to the audience. But the band is usually consistent."

Siberry would like to do more touring in the U.S., where she has been hailed by the *New York Times* and trade magazines, and



Jane Siberry will be at Dinwoodie's Cabaret this Friday

Europe, where she was lauded by a major British music weekly.

But before that, she would like to take time off to record a new album.

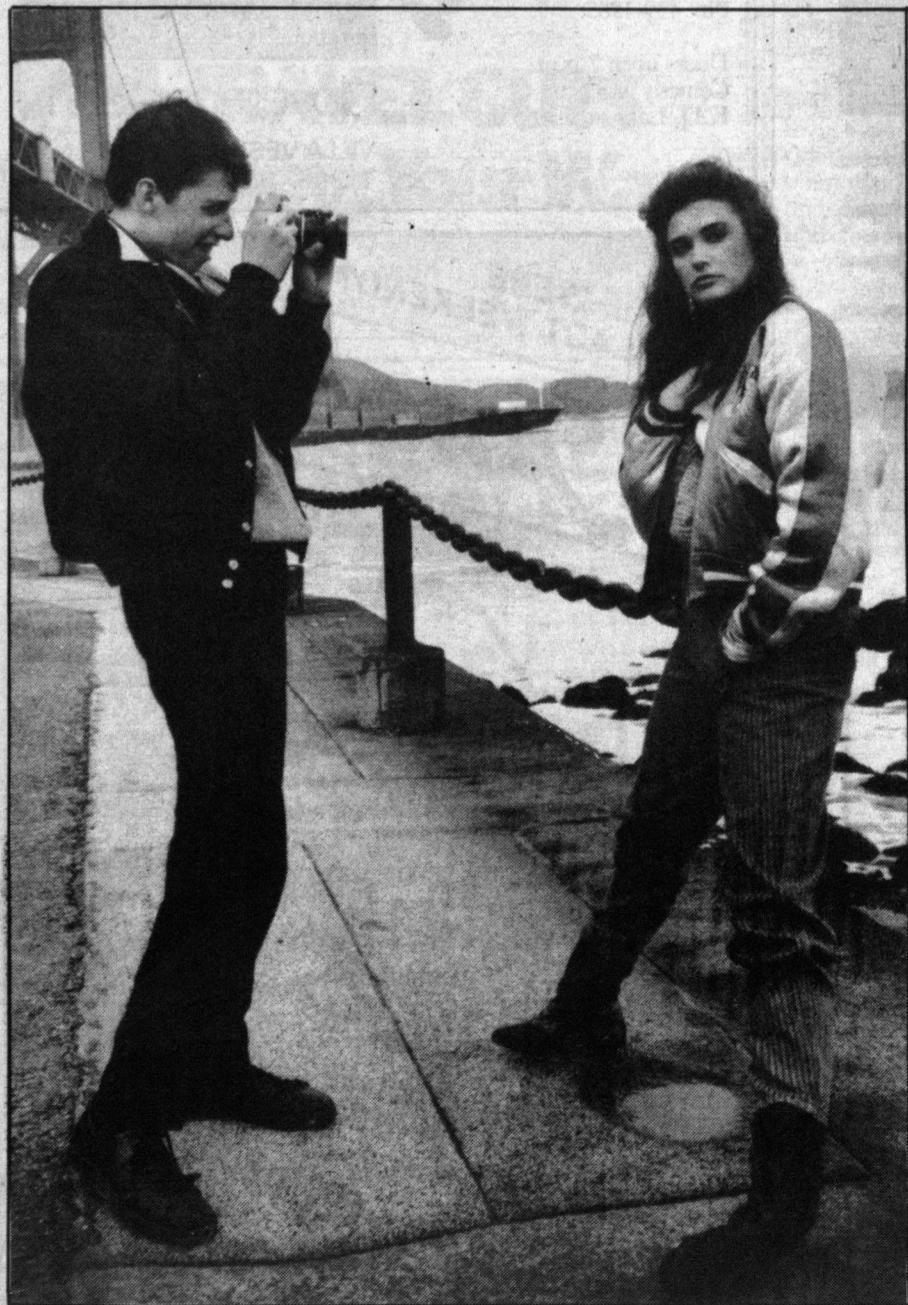
"I have lots of things ready to go, songs that are half-done. Usually, I need three or four days without talking to anyone before I present my songs to the studio."

The unflappable Siberry is not interested

in musical trends and says her next album will not be a departure from *No Borders Here*.

"I want to improve as a songwriter, to reach individuals. That's the craft of any art. So unless they invent telepathy before I die..."

...Let's hope they don't.

Jon Cryer and Demi Moore in *No Small Affair*.

## A meagre affair

*No Small Affair*  
Odeon Theatre

review by Dean Bennett

*No Small Affair* is a polite yarn of one Charles Cummings (played by Jon Cryer). Charles is an apparently asexual 16-year-old photo fanatic who suddenly falls in love with down-and-out rock singer Laura Victor (Demi Moore) who, surprise, surprise, wants to "Make it to the top."

They meet, they have fun, they argue, they separate, they reconcile; there's some casual coitus and she jets off to the smog filled Los Angeles star farm while he assumes head wolfship of a pre-adolescent flock of video virgins.

*No Small Affair* possesses some witty dialogue and receives admirable performances from both Moore and Cryer, but it has a vacuous plot and a faceless cadre of supporting players that conspire to condemn this film to Hollywood's telicentious graveyard of celluloid fluffery, resplendent in its trendy sepulchres and rose colored tombstones.

The plot noticeably disappoints in three places. The first is the relationship between Laura and Charles. Instead of learning and growing with Laura, Charles spends the whole film learning from the mistakes of the barroom starlet. The upshot is that the final scene of profligate pleasure loses effectiveness because it is not an outgrowth of their love; it is only Charles being tangibly congratulated for a job well done.

The second weakness is that the plot goes nowhere. Screenwriters Charles Bolt and Terence Mulcahy must have realized this because our mild-mannered plotline abruptly ducks into a telephone booth of contrived climaxes only to triumphantly re-emerge as

(ta-da!) *Deus Ex Machina*.

As the end of the film approaches, Laura is still down and out and Charles is still chaste, but the spirits of *deus ex machina* instantly possess our hero. He spends his life's savings to put Laura's face and phone number on the back of every taxi in San Francisco; the media pick up on this fascinating human interest story and now everybody in town is clamoring to hear Laura Victor sing - and she only has Charles to thank for it. It just ties together too nicely.

The third major flaw concerns the fleeting appearance of Laura's boyfriend. For most of the movie, Laura is taunted and tormented by him as first he dumps her, then begs for reconciliation. She is visibly torn, but we don't care 'cause we've never met the guy. He's got maybe five lines in the whole picture, so right from the start we are at a loss to understand the motivation of the major character.

The only burning question left by this story is why are we being besieged with films of this genre? The genre of *No Small Affair* is Hollywood's latest pubescent safari wherein young bashfuls are teased by sultry she-panthers. But why young males and older seductresses? Why not naive little females and brash 22-year-old gigolos? The answer probably lies in the fact that older men taking advantage of young girls is too disturbing. Realism is definitely anathema to a commercially preoccupied Hollywood.

*No Small Affair* disappoints only because it exudes stock Hollywood comedy from start to finish. All the necessary ingredients are present: take one likable male lead, add beautiful women, a sprinkling of witty one-liners, some sight gags, add a dash of sexual innuendo, place in Dolby Sound serving dish for a main course that is as delectable as it is forgettable.