

STREET SCENE

Holly Cole finds new ways to interpret old songs



CHRISTINA FUOCO

For pop singer Holly Cole, the grassroots campaign has paid off. For five albums the Toronto resident has tirelessly played clubs hoping that her interpretations of other singer/songwriters' pop songs would catch on.

Her sixth effort, last year's "Dark Dear Heart" (Metro Blue/Capitol), proved to be a charm.

"It's been an incredible tour. We've played all kinds of places we've never played before with 'sell-out' crowds no less," said Cole, who plays the Royal Oak Music Theatre on Saturday, Feb. 7, with Jeb Loy Nichols.

"I think it's partly because we've toured a bunch in the U.S. It's kind of a grassroots thing or by word of mouth; us being out there and in people's faces. Also this record has gotten much more airplay than any of my records in the past. That's certainly helped us."

"Dark Dear Heart" is a bit more in the pop music direction than her previous records. The

first single and song on the record is "I've Just Seen a Face," a snappy cover of The Beatles' hit. Cole also takes on Joni Mitchell's "River" and Patti Larkin's "I Told Him That My Dog Wouldn't Run."

She explained that she chooses which songs to include on her record in "various different ways."

"The Joni Mitchell and The Beatles songs were songs that I obviously already knew. It felt like this was the time to do those. I wanted to do a record in a really contemporary setting, more of a pop record," she said.

"People send me volumes of music and try and get me to record it. I get songs from amateur writers to publishing companies who send me songs from established writers. I get tons and tons of stuff. I listen to most everything."

A fan of the music she interprets, Cole said it's not hard for her to distance herself from the original version.

"It's basically what I do. For me to separate the song and the singer is not so hard anymore. That's the way I've always heard songs. I was a huge Beatles fan when I was a kid and when I rediscovered them a couple years

ago I decided to do 'I've Just Seen a Face.' I thought I'd slow it down and add cool vocals. It told me that's what it needed for me to do it."

For her live shows, Cole even reinterprets her interpretations.

"I went back and listened to earlier albums. I was saying, 'I can't believe I did that.' In the set we do songs from early records. The songs sound so different now than they did on the record. Even the songs on 'Dark Dear Heart' sound different in concert," Cole explained.

"I'm actually happy about that. I don't try in concert to recreate the record or anything. I think it's better for me, the band and the audience. When I go to shows and people are just doing their record, I think I would have heard this at home with a better sound system. It keeps it fresher for us too."

Now that her career is on the upswing, Cole keeps in mind the cities that have adored her from the start.

"Detroit's always been a real highlight of my touring. The audiences are very passionate and so am I. It works out very well."

Holly Cole and Jeb Loy Nichols

perform Saturday, Feb. 7, Royal Oak Music Theatre, 318 W. Fourth St., Royal Oak. Showtime is 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$17.50 for the 21 and older show. For more information, call (248) 546-7610 or (248) 645-6666.

■ Diesel Nightclub and the Sports Rock Cafe, 22509 Ecorse Road in Taylor, are hosting the first annual Downriver Classic Rock Challenge in conjunction with radio station WCSX every Wednesday from Feb. 18 to April 8. Each night five local classic rock bands will compete for \$5,000 in cash and prizes. The winners will be invited back for the finals on Wednesday, April 15. The winning band wins the chance for a one-year contract with the Gemini Entertainment Corp. For more information, call (313) 274-7000.

■ Mammoth Records has entered into a 50/50 joint venture agreement with Nickelbag Records, headed by The Dust Brothers and Spaceland founder Mitchell Frank. Artists on the 4-year-old label include Sukia, 10 cent and the Dust Brothers, while Mammoth is the home of Squirrel Nut Zippers, Seven Mary Three, Fu Manchu and Joe



Henry. The first release for Nickelbag/Mammoth is the soundtrack to "Orgazmo," a new film by South Park creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker, in May.

If you have a question or com-

Singer Holly Cole brings her unique interpretations to songs including a new version of The Beatles' "I've Just Seen a Face." She'll perform at the Royal Oak Music Theatre Feb. 7.

ment for Christina Fuoco write her at The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia, MI 48150, or via e-mail at cfuoco@aol.com, or leave a message at (734) 953-2045, ext. 2130.

Detroit Repertory celebrates 40 years with dramatic 'Fences'

BACKSTAGE PASS



ANN DELISI

Remember that time of youthful joy when you mind was uncluttered and free? At some point, all that unfettered bliss was corrupted by the introduction of a

unanswerable question, on whose answers the shape of your fledgling worldview would forever hinge. For me, the introduction occurred during a children's song that asked, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?"

Happily, the process of maturation builds immunities toward these paralyzing questions. So it's with some effort that we adults have to address certain questions. And here's the biggie: does art imitate life or does life imitate art?

Before you get a headache, there's no answer. But tonight on Backstage Pass on Detroit Public Television, we'll see the work of artists who force the question by bringing their personal experiences into the creative process.

Blair Anderson will host a performance from August Wilson's Pulitzer Prize-winning play "Fences," currently running at the Detroit Repertory Theatre. Blair explained the significance

of this staging. "197-98 is the Detroit Repertory's 40th anniversary season. Subscribers selected their all-time favorite shows in various categories, and 'Fences' came out the top all-time serious piece."

Blair explained a bit about August Wilson's oeuvre. "Wilson's writing a play for each generation - Joe Turner's Come and Gone - in the teens; 'Ma Rainey's Black Bottom' in the '20s; 'Piano Lesson' in the '30s. Some people have talked about his grand scheme being the odyssey: What is the African American experience in the 20th century?"

"Fences" is a very dense piece set in the '50s. The central character is Troy Maxson, the son of a share cropper who spends time in a penitentiary for killing a man during a robbery. Now he's working on a garbage man and raising a family. In a sense it's about the sins of the father visited on the son - in the same way

that Troy was abused by his father, he finds himself in a similar situation with his son.

"Troy philosophizes about life. There's a whole lot of storytelling on the porch. The same way that Troy struggles to break a pattern of cultural and social oppression, he speaks to a larger community. Everyone can identify with his struggle. Troy is very reminiscent of Willy Loman in 'Death of a Salesman,' in that the play addresses issues of individualism, culture and society all at the same time."

We should celebrate this special 40th anniversary season at the Detroit Repertory. Blair summed up his thoughts, "The Detroit Rep has so completely integrated itself with the community. They are so strongly committed to the neighborhood and the city of Detroit and everyone working together, and the fact that they have been around for 40 years speaks to

their excellence."

Next, I spoke with crack Backstage Pass feature producer Katherine Weider about composer Michael Daugherty, whom she's bringing to the Detroit Public Television studio. "The reason he's getting attention is because he bridges so much of that gap between American pop culture and classical music. There's a sort of estrangement with the classical world being distant and removed from the popular culture, and he's bringing it back to reality, often by using humor. You have to laugh when you hear the titles - 'Elvis Everywhere,' 'Le Tombeau de Libera,' 'Jackie O' - there's a sort of light-heartedness that's needed, or at least is missing when we think of classical."

"But they're still serious, carefully constructed compositional structures, very complex works. You still would consider them classical, and he's very well

regarded as a classical composer. He's definitely using the idioms of jazz and rock and funk, but it's not used personally. These are things from his experience growing up, like memories of sitting

in a hardware store reading a Superman comic book.

That's all on Backstage Pass tonight at midnight, repeated Friday at 7:30 p.m. on Detroit Public Television.

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