

# Street

## DeMent's vocals reflect her life

Iris Dement is winning the praises of many a country star with her distinctive vocals on her debut album, "Infamous Angel." But there's more to those vocals than her gospel training.

By LARRY O'CONNOR  
STAFF WRITER

She sings to the heavens; her songs are simple and pure from the heart.

Little else would be needed to describe Iris Dement, but her enormous singing/songwriting talents somehow require deeper exploration and understanding.

The Kansas City resident immediately sparks such a reaction listening to her stunning debut "Infamous Angel," a collection of 11 timeless country sounding numbers drawn from personal trials and triumphs on Philo/Rebound records.

Dement's distinctive voice, which is warm, both beautiful and stark, draws the most attention. Her vocals are a culmination of gospel training and emotional engagement and her people such as John Paine and Emmylou Harris singing her praises.

Yet Dement's songwriting speaks volumes as an artist attached spiritually and emotionally into her immediate surroundings. As her lyrics bear testament, she doesn't shy away from the most painful of subjects.

On "After You're Gone," Dement sings of what her life would be like without her father. She wrote the song nearly four years ago after her dad was left partially paralyzed with a stroke.

Sings Dement plaintively: "I'll miss you, O how I'll miss you/I'll dream of you and I'll cry a million tears/But the sorrow will pass and the one that will last is the love that you've given."

### Tender vocals

When treated with her tender vocals, the touching acoustic number becomes so personal the moment stands still.

The realization her father, Patrick Shaw, 82, had died only a few days ago of natural causes, makes the emotional impact of the number heart wrenching.

"It would be painful for me to sing that right now," Dement said in a telephone interview from her home in Kansas City. "When I wrote it, I guess it was painful for me at first but then it seemed there were people it meant a lot to when I sang it. When you sing in public, you can't be crying when you sing."

"It's really strange," she added, her voice trailing off. "I never had somebody die, lose someone you'll never see again. . . . We all have to go through it."



Dement's connection with her parents is a profound one. Her album is dedicated to both of them. And she cites her mother, Flora Mae Dement, as one of the biggest influences on her career.

And it was her mother who held out the dream of some day singing at the Grand Ole Opry, aptly denoted in the Dement's endearing number "Mama's Opry."

### Mom's dream

Perhaps vicariously, the daughter has helped to partially see her mother's vision to fruition. At her urging, Dement's mom does a stirring rendition of the traditional gospel number "Higher Ground" on her debut album.

"I just thought it would be neat for her to come in and sing," Dement said. "She didn't want to do it at first. It was a scary thing for her to do, but she got up the courage and came in and did it."

Dement goes into detail on the album's first notes about her life as well. Raised in a family of 14 children, her father was a farmer and then had to turn to factory work. Things went just there, and in something of a 1960s twist to Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath," the family moved to California.

Dement, 31, played piano and sang in the church choir, exposed to a steady diet of gospel music that her parents listened and sang to at an early age. She made up songs as a child, but didn't write one until she was 25.

"Our Town" was one of the first, poignantly capturing rural life and its psychic fallout.

"I was taking a trip down through Kansas and Oklahoma," she said. "I saw some of those towns and saw those people who have gone onto somewhere else."

"Even though I didn't grow up in a town like that, 'Our Town' is really about change and it's about loss."

ing things, your inability to control everything around you and keep it the way you want it to be. I guess you can say that's a personal song as well."

After performing open mike nights around Kansas City and beyond, Dement was discovered and signed by Philo Rebound Records. "Infamous Angel" is enjoying a groundswell of support, receiving airplay on WDET-FM.

While many immediately latch on to her singing, her songwriting is beginning to earn just praise. Either way, Dement doesn't mind. "I'm just glad they like some thing," she said.

Iris Dement will perform Friday, June 19, as part of the La Casa Music Series at Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 N. Woodward Ave. at Lone Pine Road. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. For information, call 616-4950.

### IN CONCERT

Monday, June 15

#### RINGO STARR AND HIS ALL STARR BAND

With Joe Walsh, Timothy B. Schmit, Neil Young, Tim Cappello, Dave Edmunds, Todd Rundgren, Burton Cummings and Zak Starkey at Pine Knob Music Theatre, 1-75 and Sashabaw Road, Clarkston. 377-0100

#### PARADISE VALLEY JAZZ JAM

Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. 832-2355

#### KISSING BIDGET

Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 485-5050

is 8:30 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. 666-4950

#### 3-D INVISIBLES

With Hell Benders at Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Conant, off I-75. 365-3979

#### CUPPA JOE

Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 485-5050

#### QWAR

With Melvins at Phoenix Plaza Amphitheater, 10 Water St., Pontiac. Tickets are \$7.50 in advance. 99-MUSIC

#### SPINAL TAP

With Alice at Pine Knob Music Theatre, 1-75 and Sashabaw Road, Clarkston. 377-0100

#### ELVIS HILLER

With 17 Reasons Why at Griff's Grill, 49 S. 2nd St., Pontiac. 334-9292

#### GANGSTER FUN

Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Conant, off I-75. 365-3979

Tuesday, June 16

#### CHISEL BROTHERS WITH THORNET-TA DAVIS

Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. 832-2355

#### CRACKERBOX

With Ugly Stick at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555

Wednesday, June 17

#### CHEAP TRICK

With DC Drive at Pine Knob Music Theatre, 1-75 and Sashabaw Road, Clarkston. 377-0100

#### WATER FOR THE POOL

With Rollin' Road at Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555

Thursday, June 18

#### SPYRO GYRA

With George Howard at Chere Park, 2600 Keweenaw, Detroit. 392-0066

#### COWBOY JUNKIES

Michigan Theater, 603 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor. Tickets are \$17.50. 99-MUSIC

#### GOLDEN TONES

310 Cass, 1815 N. Main, Royal Oak. 589-2344

#### CRABBY JACKS

With Straw Village at Griff's Grill, 49 S. First, Ann Arbor. 334-9292

#### KISS ME SCREAMING

Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555

Friday, June 19

#### FROG ISLAND JAZZ FESTIVAL

With Percy Gabriel's New Orleans Jazz Band, Rebirth Brass Band, Al Rapone and the Zedeco Express, Terrace Simen and the Mallet Playboys at Frog Island Park or Depot Town, Ypsilanti. Tickets are \$12.50 a day in advance, \$25 for series. 761-1451

#### MADE IN MICHIGAN

With The X-Poseurs, Cinecye, Bnght Black, Roaring Head and Thought Industry at the Maestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward, Detroit. Tickets are \$5. 833-9700

#### MENTAL LANDSCAPE

With Blue Symbus and God Knows at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. 831-8070

#### THE OPRAQUE

With Nappy as Cigms and Those Who Dream at Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. 832-2355

#### IRIS DEMENT

Birmingham Unitarian Church, 651 N. Woodward, at Lone Pine Road. Show time

Saturday, June 20

#### FROG ISLAND JAZZ FESTIVAL

With Green Laster Sextet, Joan Crawford and Cynthia Dewberry, Kenn Cox and Guertia Jam Band, Bobby Watson and the Horizons, Motor City Boogie Queens with Juanita McCray, Zoom and Thoretta Dark, Holmes Brothers and Koko Taylor at Frog Island Park in Depot Town, Ypsilanti. Tickets are \$12.50 in advance for a day, \$25 for series. 761-1451

#### SHADOWY MEN FROM A SHADOWNY PLANET

With the GoldenTones at the Maestic Theatre, 4140 Woodward, Detroit. Tickets are \$5 in advance and \$8 at the door. 833-9700

#### HOWLING DIABLOS

Alvin's, 5756 Cass, Detroit. 832-2355

#### CRACKERBOX

Cross Street Station, 511 W. Cross, Ypsilanti. 485-5050

#### IRON MAIDEN

With Testament at Pine Knob Music Theatre, 1-75 and Sashabaw Road, Clarkston. 377-0100

#### BLACK MALL

With Giant Metal Insects at Finney's Pub, 3965 Woodward, Detroit. 831-8070

#### GANGSTER FUN

Hamtramck Pub, 2048 Conant, off I-75. 365-3979

#### FLYIN' SAUCERS

Li's, 2930 Jacob, Hamtramck. 875-6555

#### VULGAR BOATMEN

Blind Pig, 208 S. First, Ann Arbor. 996-8555

Sunday, June 21

#### FROG ISLAND JAZZ FESTIVAL

With Second Ebenezer Baptist Church Choir, Holmes Brothers, Roy Brooks and Al Jumble, Roca Machinez, Vix and Arzo at Frog Island Park, Depot Town, Ypsilanti. Tickets are \$12.50 a day in advance, \$25 for series. 761-1451

#### ALLMAN BROTHERS

With Blues Traveler at Pine Knob Music Theatre, 1-75 and Sashabaw Road, Clarkston. 377-0100

### STREET SENSE

## Some people don't want advice, answers



BARBARA SCHIFFT

Sometimes I get sick of listening to her but I've never been able to be as outspoken about this as you were in your column. So, I gave her your column and she got angry at me. Why does she ask for advice and then get angry when I try to help? Is

this a specific kind of syndrome or does it have a scientific name?

Margi

Dear Margi,

I don't know if it has ever been identified as a special syndrome, but I recognize this collection of behaviors in patients, people I know and letters I receive from readers.

People like this are characterized by their saying "I knew I shouldn't do it, but I did it anyway" or "I knew I should but I didn't." They say they know what is right and they also say they can't do it.

The question I ask myself and you are asking yourself is why do they come for treatment or ask doctors and families for advice. The answer is they don't really want the

advice they ask for. What they do want is to be told they are fine the way they are and that they can stay that way.

They want to be told that it is the world's fault and so they want to know the secret of how to change the world. It's quite probable that if anyone could discover how to change the world, then there would be no more wars, injustices and environmental traumas.

That this is an unrealistic fantasy is lost on them. They keep asking for advice and coming for treatment because they don't believe the world can't be changed and they do believe it and they want to complain about how mean a place the world is.

They are enraged to be told that there is no Santa Claus.

Often people like this will go from therapist to therapist or friend to friend insisting that they be told what they want to hear, rather than what is the truth. One can say that they suffer from a contest with reality that cannot be won. They will never stop hitting their heads against a brick wall even if they end up unconscious.

I fully sympathize with this type of person because I, too, would like to know how to change reality and find the Easter Bunny.

Barbara

If you have a question or a comment for Barbara Schifft, a trained therapist and experienced counselor, send it to Street Sense at 62521 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150



Jazzy Jam: Vinx will be among the entertainers performing Sunday June 21 at the Frog Island Jazz Festival at Frog Island Park of Depot Town in Ypsilanti. Tickets are \$12.50 a day in advance or \$25 for the three-day series.