

Medford's Feminist Radio

by Wendy Ledger

When used with a discriminating ear, a radio can provide an inexpensive, accessible look at women's music. Unfortunately, a survey of Boston's commercial stations will quickly reveal that the heavy metal machismo of a Pat Benatar or the mindless croonings of a Juice Newton generally satisfies the corporate idea of women's music. However, there are alternatives on the radio that can and should be sought.

Women's radio is flourishing at, of all places, a small radio station in Medford. At WMFO (91.5 FM), Dawn Paul, Laurie Pleshar, Jan Kruse, Marilyn McCrory, and Susan Bernstein collectively program and broadcast "Something About the Women." Aired every Saturday from 10am-2pm, "Something About the Women" not only has the longest time slot of any women's radio program in the Boston area, it is also the only show that combines women's music with public affairs.

Songs broadcast during "Something About the Women" are chosen for both their philosophical and musical merits. The staff of "Something About the Women" strives to find music that is non-sexist, non-racist, and non-homophobic. If there is an upcoming women's event in Boston, such as a "Take Back the Night" rally, topical songs reflecting this event might be played in order to promote greater awareness of these issues. In addition, musical specials, spotlighting one specific genre of women's music, were introduced several weeks ago with a look at women in jazz. These specials will be periodically featured in the future. However, the music on "Something About the Women" is generally freeform. A variety of women's music is explored from rock to country to blues to jazz to soul. Fortunately, within this collective, each member has her favorite kind of music, thus ensuring a certain balance to each show. In addition, listeners' requests are welcomed; the listening audience is encouraged to participate in this programming collective.

Broadcast from 11-11:30 a.m. public affairs on "Something About the Women" ranges from the Girl Scouts to the Gay Pride marchers. Woody Simmons, Lynn Stephen from Women against Registration and the Draft, the Wallflower Order, and representatives from the Somerville Safe House and the Boston Walk for Hunger are among the guests that have recently appeared on the show. Yet, despite the diversity of issues covered, the coordinators of "Something About the Women" aim to make every interview informational rather than adversarial. Guests on the program would ideally have an open forum to express their views on a given subject. Future

plans for public affairs include inviting feminist males to speak and expanding this portion of the show by a half hour.

"Something About the Women" is valuable to the women's community in the Boston area for several reasons. This program provides both a contemporary and retrospective look at women's music. The public affairs slot helps illuminate women's achievements in this area, while also pointing out the serious problems we face here. All in all, "Something About the Women" is highly recommended as an enjoyable, educational way to start off any weekend.

The Secret Life of Plants

Bougainvillea, at Studio Red Top, Boston, MA, August 7, 1981.

by Wendy Ledger

On August 7, Bougainvillea performed at Studio Red Top before an enthusiastic audience. Featuring Jeanette Muzima on vibes, Gwen Delbaugh on tenor saxophone, Maggie Rizzi on bass, Paula Gallitano on piano and Sharon Eldridge on drums, Bougainvillea is yet another example of the vital force of women in jazz today.

Bougainvillea showed expertise in their selection and organization of material. Their well-paced performance seemed to flow continually into different jazz veins. For example, in the opening set, the quintet began with balladic, mainstream jazz but gradually shifted gears to build up to the climatic final song of this set—an upbeat, wonderfully irreverent version of the "I Love Lucy" theme song.

In the second set, this progression continued as Bougainvillea began with Latin-flavored jazz and ended their performance with progressive, spacier compositions. Although Bougainvillea's repertoire included compositions by Bobby Hutcherson, Horace Silver, and Thelonius Monk, three songs of this evening's performance were by members of the group. In fact, Jeanette Muzima's haunting "Blue Breeze" was one of the more memorable songs of the evening.

Bougainvillea not only chose challenging material, they displayed the talent to successfully cover the musical diversity of their repertoire. The group seemed to relax as the evening progressed. Their playing grew tighter, and the rhythm section was increasingly funkier. In addition, during the second set, whistles, woodblocks, and bells provided an extra exotic tinge to the overall sound. Although each member of Bougainvillea should be applauded for her musicianship, tenor saxophonist Gwen Delbaugh should be singled out for her consistent excellence throughout the performance.

Halfway through the second set, Jeanette Muzima explained the meaning of the group's

name. Bougainvillea is a type of creeping vine with magenta flowers whose strength can break down walls. Yet, it is a relatively unknown vine whose power is only recognized after the walls have crumbled. Although this quintet is steadily gaining more recognition, Bougainvillea's musical strengths should be acknowledged by a wider jazz audience. This women's jazz quintet frequently plays in the San Francisco Bay Area. Their performances should not be missed.

As Cool As Ever

Shadows and Light, by Joni Mitchell. Elektra/Asylum, 1980.

by Holly Cara

Her report cards used to read, "Joan does not relate well." She flunked out of high school in twelfth grade, entered into an early marriage and divorce, and delved into folk singing. Soon after that, Joni Mitchell became a songwriter of some reknown when Judy Collins had a top ten hit in 1968 with her song, "Both Sides Now."

Mitchell made successful albums which featured her dreamy, ethereal portraits accompanied by acoustic guitar. She carved an image for herself and when she wanted to step out of it, in 1975, she found that it was not going to be easy.

The media and the public were used to the Joni Mitchell of the late sixties, and that's what they wanted. Therefore, when she released the avant-garde and unexpected *Hissing of Summer Lawns* with its jazz influences, critics lambasted her work. Mitchell learned to ignore them and go the way she felt she had to progress. *Hejira* followed the next year, *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*, and then *Mingus*. None of these approximated the success of her earlier albums.

In 1978, she had been contacted by Charles Mingus to collaborate on what would be his last work. After his death, Mitchell released an album (*Mingus*) which contained these collaborations, completing her eventual move toward jazz, and thoroughly shaking the music world.

Shadows and Light was recorded live in Santa Barbara, in late 1979, and contains interpretations of Mitchell's later works, many from the *Mingus* album. Her band includes Jaco Pastorius on bass, Don Alias on drums, Pat Metheny on lead guitar, and Michael Brecker on saxophone. The Persuasions assist on vocals.

The album opens with a brief, tender collage which melts some dialogue from "Rebel Without A Cause" (Father: You can't be idealistic all your life"; Son: "Except to yourself") into Frankie Lyman singing, "No no no, I'm not a juvenile delinquent."

Mitchell's voice remains as cool and breezy as ever. Her vocal dexterity is most evident when she breaks into jazz phrasing. There are stunning moments here, among them "Coyote," the incredible half-sung, half-spoken love story. And in "Goodbye Pork Pie Hat," when she counsels, "love is never easy . . . now we are black and white/embracing in the New York night/ very likely we'll be driven out of town."

There is a spirited, kick-ass rendering of the Frankie Lyman classic, "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" with the Persuasions singing backup, and the delicate power chant "Shadows and Light." My personal favorite is the deliciously percussive "Dreamland." And some early works like "Free Man in Paris" and "Woodstock" are here as well.

Commercial acceptance rarely is a hallmark of quality, so if this record has not been widely noticed that's probably why. But then, Joni Mitchell is probably used to that. She has always remained honest to herself and for that she deserves respect.

Cash Bonus

Seven Year Ache, by Rosanne Cash. CBS, 1981.

by Holly Cara

Unlike her wild, sequins-and-satin clad stepsister Carlene, who has married the successful new wave producer/singer Nick Lowe, Rosanne Cash has been for the most part, rather reserved and

quiet. In 1979 she released her first album, *Right or Wrong*. She followed that by having a baby. Recently, with her husband and producer, Rodney Crowell, she went back into the studio for what was to become *Seven Year Ache*.

The result is a really fine record. Rosanne's approach is a tad countrified, recalling her well-known dad, Johnny Cash. Though there are songs that reinforce the "I'll do anything to keep you" image of women's popular love songs, they are few. And there are welcome innovations like Cash's own "Blue Moon with Heartache," in which she sings, "oh how can it all look so right and feel so wrong/ I'll play the victim for you honey, but not for long."

Cash also redresses modern standards like Steve Forbert's "What Kinda Girl?" and Tom Petty's "Hometown Blues." She sings the supremely weepy Merle Haggard ballad, "You Don't Have Very Far to Go." She is joined by Rosemary Butler and Emmylou Harris for the tongue-in-cheek "My Baby Thinks He's a Train." On "Where Will the Words Come From?" in which the singer tries to tell her lover that she doesn't love him anymore, Emmylou Harris joins Cash for a splendid duet. The album's closer, "I Can't Resist," is pure schmaltz but it works. And two of the best songs are Cash's own "Seven Year Ache" and the aforementioned "Blue Moon with Heartache." This is one reviewer who is definitely impressed, and looking forward to Rosanne Cash's next work with anticipation.



Sarah Gonzales, Cuban folk singer and leader of that country's New Song Movement, performed July 24 before an enthusiastic crowd at Boston University's Morse Auditorium. Accompanying herself on the acoustic guitar, Gonzales performed her own music in Spanish with an English interpreter. Her spirited, passionate music spoke of the politics and culture of her homeland and evoked a powerful, emotional response from her audience. Be sure to catch her next time around.
by K.K. Wilber

—photo by Susan Wilson