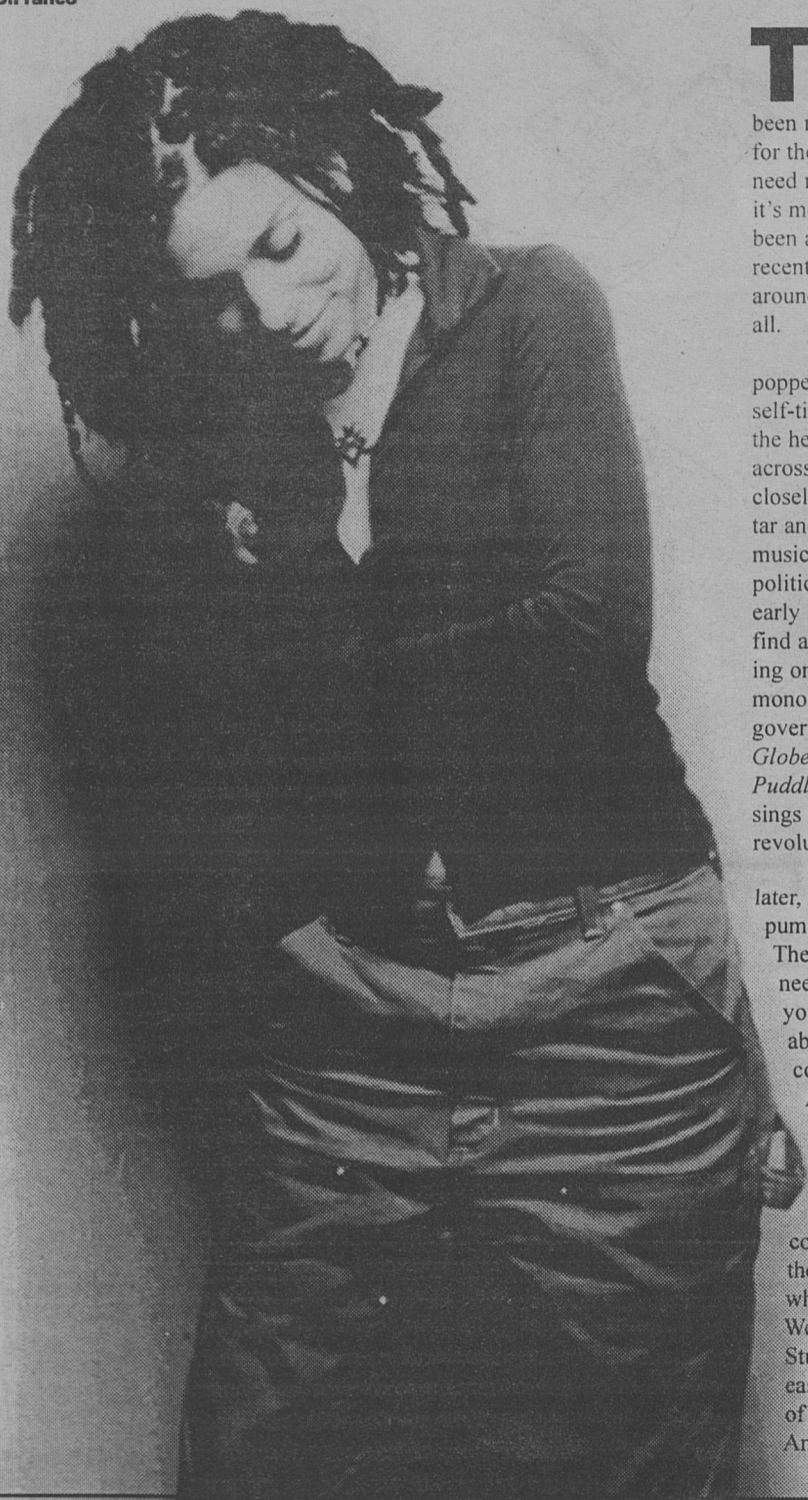


Righteous Babe:  
Ani DiFranco



## Shouting Out Loud and Clear

Ani DiFranco does something with her music

BY TANIA KUPCZAK

This review is not meant for all the serious Ani fans out there, because I know you've already been rockin' out to her new album for the last few weeks and you don't need me to tell you to buy it. Instead, it's meant for those of us who have been a little less than thrilled with her recent work, or maybe never got around to giving her music a listen at all.

When Ani DiFranco popped onto the folk scene with her self-titled album in 1991, she stole the hearts of boys and girls alike all across the States. Armed only with a closely-shaved head, an acoustic guitar and her grinding vocals, her music echoed the great tradition of political song writing. At one of these early shows, it was not unusual to find a crowd of dedicated fans cheering on Ani's half-sung, half-chanted monologues of corporate greed and governmental abuse. The *Boston Globe* raved about her 1993 album *Puddle Dive*, writing, "DiFranco sings songs the way guerillas fight revolutions."

Now, a decade and some later, Ani still has some people pumping their fists for democracy. These days, though, she barely needs a last name and many of her younger followers have no idea about the issues she's cleverly couched in punk instrumentation. At a recent concert at Memorial Auditorium, I saw droves of 13-year-old girls yelling along to the dildo cheer, "D to the I to the L to the DO." I couldn't help but think back on the first Ani show I attended, while at Oberlin College in 1993. We were all starry-eyed Women's Studies students, and we could easily understand the importance of a song called "If He Tries Anything."

### review

**Ani DiFranco**  
**So Much Shouting, So Much Laughter**  
Righteous Babe 2CD

On Ani's last few albums, particularly 2001's reveling/reckoning, her musicianship has overtaken her political content, and it's much more difficult to distinguish the rallying anthems from the sappy love-and-lose ballads. A consistency in quality of song-writing and accompaniment becomes the thread of her recent work. I have to admit that I have not been entirely satisfied with the direction of Ani's music. As witnessed by the lyrics in *to the teeth* (1999), she's "just not angry anymore." Of course, I do appreciate her talent and sensibility, and I am always willing to give the new albums a listen.

As I opened the CD sleeve for *So Much Shouting, So Much Laughter*, Ani's second double live album, a photo of a truck stop with the words "We Believe in God—America—Trucks" marquee on the side told me the old Ani was back. *So Much...* consists of two CDs, which are actually two complete albums.

The first, titled *Stray Cats*, is a collection of favorite tunes, in no particular order, but which begin with a sound so classically Ani—the tune-up of her guitar. She executes a beautiful version of "Swan Dive" that traces a musical trajectory through her career, beginning with guitar and vocals and ending in a lush layered orchestration. Feisty and raucous songs dragged from the old days are masterfully reinvented to display Ani's expanding musicianship. The new material, such as the song "Shrug," seems to fit smoothly in with the standards, and the overall effect is a slightly off-kilter skip through a decade of Ani's creative

musings. The disc ends with "Welcome To," a kind of bridge into the next experience of listening.

The second album, *Girls Singing Night*, is arranged in a more traditional concert format. The sequence of songs guides you through what might be the perfectly hybridized concert. There are moments of casual banter, false starts, and incredibly intense musical congruency. The individual songs were recorded in a variety of venues but all contain the same live energy that Ani became known for in her live performances. It was not difficult for me to resurrect that spirit of feminist activism when I heard the enthusiastic cheers of the audience during "Gratitude" and "Self-Evident." This latter track doesn't appear on any other recordings. It is a recitation in the quintessential Ani style, complete with haunting music—part story about the horror of September 11th, and part diatribe about the mishandling of the terrorist attacks by the government. As Ani chants, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, number one: George W. Bush is not president," the crowd erupts in wild approval. She claims that this poem will not appear on future albums nor will she perform it again, because "it is just of its time."

*So Much Shouting, So Much Laughter* as a double album is incredibly successful. It brings the old fans like me back to the truth of honest song-writing while engaging newer listeners with the entirety of Ani DiFranco's musical journey. While there are moments of disparity, it is in these human revelations that her talent reveals itself. It is a record in the real sense, as Ani sings, "a record as in the record of an event of people in a room making music together." ▼

Tania Kupczak is a webgoddess and semicloseded banjo player with politics who lives in Jericho.

## Folk Music is Cool! Wishing Chair and Jamie Anderson Sing Out

BY STEPH PAPPAS

On Saturday October 12th Wishing Chair with Jamie Anderson graced the stage at Burlington Coffee House where one can go to catch performers up close and personal amidst friendly banter.

Jamie Anderson and the duo Wishing Chair have been travel-

ing for several weeks, swapping the opening set duties and main set role. Their audiences have been slowly evolving from straight coffeehouse-folkies over to more and more lesbians as they become known in women's communities. It was a mixed audience that night, and I saw more than one mom with a teenaged daughter in tow at these gigs. Wishing Chair has been in Burlington four times—it's about

No Reason To Fret:  
Jamie Anderson, left,  
and Wishing Chair



### review

**Jamie Anderson**  
**Wishing Chair**  
Burlington Coffeehouse  
October 12, 2002

time we got to know them better.

Jamie Anderson opened up this particular evening. Immediately I felt the presence of her performer capabilities. She says she's from North Carolina then goes into a guitar strum, and sings the first song ("I

Wanna) Drive" of a short half-hour set. Talk was kept brief between songs, though I bet, given a longer set time, Jamie may have elaborated more details.

A few sparse notes deliberately used as a hook were meant to draw us into "Dark Chocolate." In "Potato Chips," the third number, we caught Jamie throwing back her head to project the humor in the lyrics. Jamie stayed with the solo-guitar-singer-songwriter fare but invited her two friends known as Wishing Chair to join in on three songs to finish up her set.

Kiya Heartwood of Wishing Chair sang backup vocal and Miriam Davidson played accordion for two of those songs. For the third and final song in Jamie Anderson's set, Miriam swapped her accordion for back up vocal.

The power trio began as Jamie sang "I feel >>>