

The Arts

Interview: Elaine Townsend

by Cheri Goldstein

Listening to Elaine Townsend on the telephone is almost as pleasant as listening to her album "Heartbreaker Blues." Her southern drawl isn't thick enough to obscure her words, just as her instrumentals do not overpower her voice on the album.

"Heartbreaker Blues" allows Townsend to present her versatility through blues, folk/rock, bluegrass, and even reggae styles. Townsend explains, "It's as eclectic as you can get, which has been uncommon on the albums the major labels have been releasing. It has been considered unmarketable to have several styles on one album, but I think the tide is just beginning to turn towards more variety."

Townsend moved from South Carolina to Berkeley, California, in the mid '80s. "I really wasn't moving to California as much as I was moving away from the South. I was ready for a change, the musicians I wanted to work with were in California, and I needed to leave the South. I was feeling a lot of oppressive attitudes there."

Since Townsend has been out west she has been able to play with her mentor, Robin Flowers. Townsend has also opened for k.d. lang, played at the Gay Games in Vancouver, and has toured with Dianne Davidson.

All of the songs on the album are written by Townsend. "Mostly I write about relationships. I care a lot about world peace and hunger and that kind of thing--but it is relationships that ruffle the feathers of my muse."

Being a lesbian is certainly a large part of who Elaine Townsend is. "It is such an integral part of who I am. I am also in recovery and that is another big part of who I am. It is a newer part--I have only been doing that for four years and I have consciously been a lesbian since I was sixteen."

Townsend has played in many gay/lesbian establishments as well as many straight places. "I have always played my music pretty much any place I could get a gig. I have tried to keep my hand in folk, bluegrass, and women's music circles as well as the new acoustic circles. It's important for me to get my music to as many different audiences as I possibly can. I want a wide range of people to feel comfortable listening to my music."

Currently Townsend is on a 22-city tour of the east coast ranging from Portland, Maine, to St. Petersburg, Florida. Also included on the tour will be the Southern Women's Music and Comedy Festival, Composts, and the Gulfport Women's Music Festival.

Townsend will be performing at the Unitarian Church, Main Street, Montpelier on May 17 at 7:30 p.m. Tickets will be on sale at the door on a \$5 - \$10 sliding scale.

Elaine Townsend on her "Heartbreaker Blues" Tour

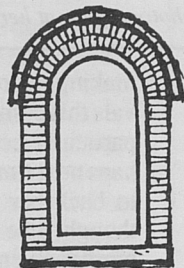


**Unitarian Church
Main St., Montpelier
May 17, 1991
7:30 p.m.
\$5 - \$10 sliding scale**

Album on Ladyslipper's Recommended List

"A versatile and dynamic guitarist and an energetic performer. Be sure to catch her!"
-- Robin Flowers

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