

# The Changer and the Changed; A Talk with Cris Williamson

The legendary Cris Williamson was in Vermont recently for a pair of concerts, one at Middlebury College on September 20, and the other at the River Valley Performing Arts Center in Putney on October 6. Before the Middlebury concert she spent an hour talking about her life, her music and being useful in the world, with OITM's Sage Russell.

**OITM:** You've recently completed a tour celebrating the 15th anniversary of *The Changer and the Changed*. What does the album say to you now?

**Cris:** Well, it still is an amazing thing to me, that it's so powerful, because I swear to you, I think I've put that same power in everything I've done subsequently, but nothing's ever had quite the effect on people that that album has. And so it says to me there's something else going on beyond my intent. I think I'm saying the same thing over and over and over, which is basically that we're all interconnected and everything's interrelated, and we need to learn to love in this world. And we must do it, we must learn how to do it to save ourselves and save the world. I'm just writing one song over and over.

**OITM:** But *The Changer* was still something special.

**Cris:** Powerful. And it wasn't by intent or design. And that's the beauty of it for me. Because then I get to participate in it too...I truly write for myself, and then it's a miracle to me if it's useful to someone else.

**OITM:** Does it surprise you? Or have you gotten used to it?

**Cris:** I am not surprised so much, but I value it greatly. I almost count on it now, that it will work. I guess I would be more surprised if it didn't. Because I do want to make a difference. I do want to help in my time.

**OITM:** Well, you've certainly done that.

**Cris:** Thanks. I think a lot of that's because people allow it to have its way with them. And that's the beauty of music. I don't know any armor that's very successful at keeping it out. And that's terrific. It doesn't have to do with me other than if I sing it right every time, make the notes right make the shape of the thing right - the presentation - then it should work every time. The spell that you have to weave. And I'm under it too.

**OITM:** Really? Night after night after night?

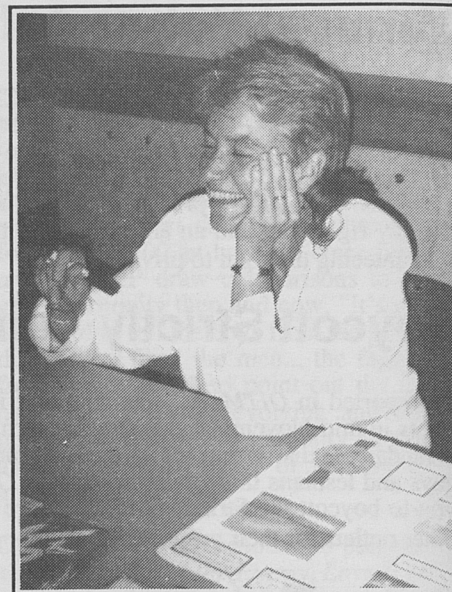
**Cris:** Yes. And that's the object, to beckon the spirit to be with you. They (the songs) are invocations in a way...There's something visiting in the room, and you know it's rippling through the people. People weep. They allow it to have its way with them, and it's the greatest feeling. And you're never content with anything less than that.

**OITM:** You're sounding like you think of yourself as a channel or a medium, and the spirit moves through you.

**Cris:** I'm an Aquarius. I can't help but think of myself as that.

**OITM:** But you're also the creator.

**Cris:** Changer and the changed. That's exactly what that means. I strive for music I'd say is really not gender-specific. More universally couched. And I talk more about the human condition. That's what interests me. It's not enough for me to preach to the converted. It's not enough for an artist I don't think. How am I to gauge myself? By what shall I measure, if people are all like me, and they're responding equally? That's easy, to be in that easy company, and it's a wonderful thing. Mind you, I love that. But also, there's the challenge of singing for people



that I would consider to be a little bit more resistant. More difficult...There's nothing that pleases me more than that look that comes over people's faces, "Where have you been? Why haven't I known about you?"

**OITM:** You've been touring for at least 20 years that I know about. I wanted to ask you why you keep going.

**Cris:** I love my job. There are times I like to take off, and a lot of times what I'll do is work really hard so I can grant myself some time. I also get too rusty if I stop. Just like any machine. I stopped for a year once. And getting started again was unbelievable. I felt so rusty. You get in a groove when you work all the time. You become well oiled and you function beautifully. You just get better and better, like a stone that's endlessly polished in a tumbler. I like it, and I suppose in some way I'm a little afraid to stop. The older you get, the harder it is to get back up. I'm almost 45 now. It's not as easy. And yet I'm getting better, the older I get.

**OITM:** You're periodically accused of not being open about being a lesbian in your concerts, in your music. Do these accusations get to you?

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