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Rock star is enjoying her successful career

By Julie Freeman
Of the Emerald

A rock and roll career is not all wonderful, but it beats a 9-to-5 job teaching in Redmond, said Rindy Ross, saxophonist and lead singer for the Portland-based band Quarterflash.

Ross, a former elementary school teacher, stepped back into the classroom Wednesday night to deliver an informal lecture at the University as part of the People of Oregon lecture series sponsored by the EMU Cultural Forum.

Dressed in black pants and sequin-studded jacket, Ross spoke to an audience of about 150 about her career and former experience as a teacher.

Ross said she got involved with music in college, but at that time it was purely for enjoyment.

"I had no aspirations to be a professional musician when I was in college. I loved playing the ecoustical guitar, and for a short period of time I was Joni Mitchell," Ross joked.

But Ross said her true direction at that time was to be a teacher. She taught elementary school in Redmond, Ore., for three years and learned that she loved kids, but hated the paperwork and politics the job involved.

Both Ross and her husband Marv Ross, who currently writes the band's music, eventually quit their teaching jobs and devoted themselves to a full-time music career.

Ross said they came to Portland because "you don't

start a budding music career in Bend," which is where they lived while teaching in Redmond.

"We got committed to having the best bar band ever in Portland. The goal was not to get a record contract; the goal was to be the best bar band in Portland, and to make a living.

"I guess that was the ultimate goal — to eat. And we did that, and we actually ate quite well for about three years and were quite happy being the best bar band we could be," Ross said.

The next challenge was to try and get a record deal, she said. The band, which was called Seafood Mama at that time, got some management and started to market themselves as a regional band.

"We were a very eclectic band, mostly swing music. We were extremely proud of having the most obscure songs in the world. We didn't want to be anywhere near commercial — it just was like a dirty word," Ross said.

The band then got a spot on a local television show and decided to press their own record from a demonstration version of the song "Harden My Heart," which they had recorded in the basement of Ross' home.

They plugged the record at the end of the show, and Ross said she was shocked to find that people would actually buy it.

The homemade record sold more than 10,000 copies in Portland and subsequently led to a record contract with Geffen

records.

Internal conflicts broke the original band up before Ross and her husband cut their first album, called "Quarterflash," with a set of studio musicians in Los Angeles.

Ross said the new band, which was reformed with Oregon musicians after the record, changed its name because she was tired of being the "mama" in Seafood Mama.

"The connotations that went along with it were just not that great," she said.

The name Quarterflash came from a book of New Zealand folk phrases and means something that is one-quarter flash and three parts foolish.

"To me this means not to take yourself too seriously," Ross said.

Since its name change, the band has gone on to tour with performers such as Sammy Hagar, Elton John and Rick Springfield, and has produced two more albums, including "Back to Blue," which was just released in September.

A new video from the band will be released in January, Ross said. And in four days Quarterflash will begin a new tour with the band Starship.

Ross said she has grown more cynical, worldly and secure about herself through her experiences with Quarterflash, but underneath has tried to remain herself.

"I just am what I am," she said.



Photo by Ross Martin
Quarterflash lead singer Rindy Ross has come a long way since her earlier days teaching elementary school in Redmond.

Council approves a board to oversee research park

By Scott McFetridge
Of the Emerald

The Eugene City Council unanimously approved an ordinance creating a seven-member board to oversee the proposed Riverfront Research Park at a Wednesday meeting.

The board will be made up of four people selected by University President Paul Olum and three people selected by city officials. In compliance with state law, Eugene Mayor Brian Obie must also approve the University appointments, said Cathy Briner, a city development department employee who will be coordinating the selection process.

Applications for the research park commission will begin soon and should be completed within three to four weeks, Briner said.

The intergovernmental committee approved by the council will succeed the non-profit corporation that had previously overseen the research park. The non-profit corporation was forced to disband because of difficulties obtaining insurance, which was needed to protect the corporation's members from liability for the research park.

Dan Williams, University vice president for administration, said the city will

assume liability for the park. The newly approved committee cannot be held responsible for the research park.

Williams said he supported the non-profit corporation, but believes the public commission "is going to work out even better.

"This will make sure the process is open to the public," Williams said.

According to the ordinance, the seven-member board will "provide a forum for public participation and public comment on plans and actions necessary for the development of the Riverfront Research Park property."

The commission will "conduct research, hold hearings, study, investigate, analyze and make expert evaluations of proposals concerning development" of the research park, the ordinance stated.

John Moseley, University vice president for research, said the public commission will be more effective than the previous corporation because it will allow for more public comment.

"Everything will be done subject to Oregon open meeting law," Moseley said.



Keller 'adopts' Obie for the day

Former Eugene Mayor Gus Keller "adopted" current Mayor Brian Obie Wednesday as part of the Great American Smokeout program. Keller, now a non-smoker, will help Obie go 24 hours without a cigarette today, and if he is successful, speculators jest Eugene may be in for a cigarette tax soon.

Photo by Karen Stallwood