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ENTERTAINMENT

Near makes peace through music
Singer finds role as social leader

By Ming Rodrigues
Emerald Reporter

Folk singer Holly Near has always been more concerned with peace-making than hit-making.

Her uncompromising vision has led her to defend thorny causes such as human rights in El Salvador, the oppression of AIDS victims, and woman's rights, leading Ms. to name her Woman of the Year in 1985.

Indeed, Near can lay claim to being one of America's most respected progressive folk singers and social leaders.

On Sunday at 7:30 p.m. in the EMU Ballroom, fans will get to see her perform in a concert sponsored by the EMU Cultural Forum and the Gay and Lesbian Helpline.

Accompanied by pianist John Bucchino, with sign language interpretation by Susanne Beaman, Near's concert celebrates the release of her 15th album, *Singer in the Storm*, and the publishing of her autobiography, *Fire in the Rain...Singer in the Storm*.

She joined Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland for "Free The Army," an anti-war show, and worked throughout the seventies for peace in Indochina. She has a particular passion for Central and Latin America.

Near is aware of the typical reaction to the term "political activist/singer."

"People think, 'Oh no, long hair, jeans, plays guitar, sings 40,000 verses about nuclear fuel,'" she said. "But I'm



Photo by Courtesy photo
Folk singer Holly Near will perform Sunday in the EMU Ballroom.

much more of a cabaret artist, really."

Near grew up on a small ranch in Northern California with parents who created the kind of environment that encouraged children to explore, create and perform.

Soon she entered a career in television and film. She was a guest star on such TV shows as "The Mod Squad," "Room 222," and "The Partridge Family." She also did a stint in the Broadway production of "Hair."


In 1971, she steered her career in a new direction and started writing and singing protest songs.

"There was such a need for what I was doing that I filled the void," Near said.

"Had there not been a need and if people didn't like what I was doing, it wouldn't have happened," she said. "It wasn't something I had planned to do. It was the endless invitation that brought me into the work that I'm quite well known for now, but I didn't start out with the goal to be a political singer and international ambassador."

Tickets for the concert are available at the EMU Main Desk and are \$9 for students and \$11 for the general public.

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