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MUSIC

UO alumna succeeding in music

By Kim Weiss

Assistant Entertainment Editor

Patty Larkin has turned around the block a few times in her life. Each spin has taken her into a new adventure, each one gradually leading her toward the world of music. These turns have been steps toward development of Larkin's life as a musician. How did she become initially exposed to music?

"We [my family] were really encouraged to play music to make us better people," she said.

Larkin's first instrument was the piano, which she studied for around four years. But then she wanted "something to do, something to focus on alone," she picked up the guitar and forgot the piano.

Larkin continued to play and study guitar in her years of schooling, including her secondary education during the 1970s. She started school in Indiana but changed to the University of Oregon.

"I wanted to experience something different ... it sounded really green and beautiful," she said.

She took classes at the University's School of Music, including music theory, music appreciation and a course in jug band, and was involved in outdoor programs and folklore courses.

While Larkin was a student at the University she performed at coffeehouses, the EMU Fish-bowl and various local events. She also participated in a couple jug bands, as a result of her taking the jug band course.

"I played whenever I could," she said.

After acquiring her degree from the University, Larkin headed to the Berklee College of Music in Massachusetts. At Berklee she studied privately jazz guitar.

Before she received a record contract in 1985 Larkin had been performing seriously for around five years and listening to other musicians.

She has been influenced musically by artists in several genres, such as classical and jazz music. She listens to singer-songwriter Richard Thompson, Lucinda Williams and draws inspiration from Tori Amos, Nanci Griffith and, early on, Joni Mitchell. She also listens to Alanis Morissette.

"She [Morissette] is another angry woman, angst-ridden," Larkin said. "The lyrics are way front; I understand them."

Her musical influences include artists of different genres, but how does she define her own style? According to a press release, Larkin claims her style to be "folk music meets the beat generation meets rock 'n' roll." Would she still agree with that statement?

"Yes. [My style] draws from all three aspects — Celtic, jazz, blues. There is an acoustic background but also pop — what comes off the radio," Larkin said. "And lyrically, there is 'beat' [generation] or stream of consciousness."

How did her talent for lyric writing develop? "It's a personal subjective process. Reading [literature] helps and listening to others — what is working and what isn't," Larkin explained.

According to her press release, Larkin manages



COURTESY PHOTO

Patty Larkin will be in Corvallis next Thursday.

to make her latest album, *Strangers World*, hang together "with a musical and lyrical similarity."

"John Leventhal [producer] has a good sense of textures, atmosphere and a good feeling for space," Larkin said.

But Leventhal's expertise was not the only thing that led to Larkin's latest creation. Another thing Larkin said she does to develop lyrics is "feeling alienated, whether from yourself, others or life, and trying to find resolution for yourself."

We know how she finds or writes her lyrics and where she gains her musical influences. So which comes first ... the music or the lyrics?

"The music comes first most of the time — starts with a guitar part or guitar riff," Larkin said. "Some stuff — music and lyrics — comes out at the same time; it feels really integrated and 'could be the songs you like the most.'"

Now, with *Strangers World*, Larkin has hit the ten-year mark in the music business. Her first album, *Step Into the Rain*, was released in 1985 on Philo Records.

Around four years ago, Larkin was part of the foursome women's group, Four Bitchin' Babes. She also did group tours with *On a Winter's Night* and *Winter's Solstice*. But recently, she has concentrated mainly on solo work rather than group tours. She has been busy promoting *Strangers World*, in the recent months on tour.

She will be touring soon, with a full band — including Suzanne Vega and Jennifer Kimball — through Oregon. She will be in Corvallis at the Majestic Theater next Thursday at 8 p.m. Tickets will be \$9 member, \$10 general and \$12 door. She will be in Portland at the Aladdin Theater on Oct. 14 at 8 p.m. Tickets will be \$14. And her last stop in Oregon will be in Ashland at the Buffalo Music Theater on Oct. 14 at 8:30 p.m. Tickets will \$12.

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