

Speaking with a Sage



Performer Rachael Sage will take the stage at Luna tonight to promote her new album, 'Public Record'

By Ryan Nyburg
Senior Pulse Reporter

Rachael Sage has made a name for herself the past few years as a self-styled folk rock artist. Now, with five albums under her belt and her own record label, MPress, Sage has been playing shows across the country with a variety of performers to promote her latest release, "Public Record." Recently, she spoke to the Emerald about songwriting, performing live and staying independent in a business-oriented world.

Emerald: Have you ever played Eugene before?

Sage: No, I haven't. We were going to play at a coffeehouse, but there was a double-booking problem and it didn't go through. Now that coffeehouse is no more.

Emerald: How much time do you spend touring?

Sage: We try to do about 150 dates a year and we're shooting for 200. Mostly, it just boils down to wanting to bring my music to people live. I think it has been incredibly fortunate that my release schedule has been annual — I've had a release a year for about five years now. It's been really fun to go out on the road to support new albums. It's just what I do, it's in my blood now.

Emerald: Do you find it difficult to tour and run your own label?

Sage: Oh yeah. I think that the main challenge is pretty cut and dried. It's time management. Trying to find a balance in your personal life and realizing that it isn't possible. It has been a process. I didn't realize when I got into the label stuff a few years back how it would permeate every facet of my life. But this is what I like doing.

Emerald: Why did you choose to start your own label?

Sage: Just faith that I had figured it all out and that it would be fascinating. I think that at the time when I was getting ready to put out my first CD it was a pivotal moment in the music industry when people were just starting to embrace the idea of not waiting around, not trying to pander to the major label dream. People wanted to be able to be a touring musician and make a living at it. I hadn't really glimpsed that back in New York City, where I had come from. It was all about "Who's your lawyer?" "Do you have a manager?" "When's your showcase?" This was when I was a teenager. I realize that if I signed with a major label, people would be defining what I should or shouldn't be.

Emerald: Do you see what you are doing as part of a larger movement?

Sage: Yes. It's one of those things where at a certain point you have to let go of something that other people may have departed to you as the end all be all of what it's about, being an artist. There was a time when there were patrons for artist and geniuses like Shakespeare were only able to exist because someone was able to support what they did. Dan Bern has a funny song that I just heard him do over in Los Angeles, called "Art on the Run." It's a long, funny list of all these quintessential artists and describing what their lives would be like in this century. Picasso painting with one hand on the cell phone, one on the canvas. I think that if you want to do work for yourself that is also relevant to other people, then you have to embrace the business part in a way creative way that informs what you do.

Emerald: What do you think influences your songwriting the most?

Sage: The fact that I am really open to getting involved with people. I protect that with everything that I have, because I know that's what creates

music for me. It's about relationships, whether they're friendships, or one person I talk to on a bus, or someone I meet at a gig, or someone I write to, someone online who has a problem. It's listening is what gives me songwriting, listening to other people tell me their stories and then processing how that reflects my own story. I try not to ignore that human interaction that you have the option to let in instead of push away.

Emerald: There have been a number of descriptions of your music — "folk noir" in particular — but how would you describe your music?

Sage: I think it's "art-pop-folk-rock-multimedia-comedy-vaudeville." No, I don't know. I think that I've been embracing the Bette Midler part of my personality recently. A lot of my Yiddish-Jewish humor has been filtering in between my undoubtedly serious and introspective songwriting and it has been really working for me. I started to figure out what has kept me from doing that in the past was being in New York City and being in a place where I was so of that city and so dime-a-dozen.

Emerald: Who are you listening to right now?

Sage: I mentioned him before, but I've been listening to a lot of Dan Bern recently. I think he's an amazing writer. Also, a guy named Lach out of New York, part of the anti-folk movement, sort of founded that scene.

Emerald: You have any plans for the future?

Sage: We're going to visit the Jelly Belly factory in about half an hour.

Emerald: Any advice for the youth of America?

Sage: More finger painting. Yeah, more finger painting and more refined sugar.

Sage will perform at Luna today at 8 p.m. Tickets are available through a \$7 cover charge.

Contact the senior Pulse reporter at ryanburg@dailyemerald.com.

Folk rock artist Rachael Sage will make her Eugene debut at Luna.

Courtesy



Sage visits Luna as part of a nationwide tour to support 'Public Record,' her latest release. She started her own record label, MPress, so she could have the freedom to create her own style of music.

Courtesy

PULSE BRIEF

Dan Bern to perform at Café Paradiso tonight

Acclaimed singer-songwriter Dan Bern will come to Eugene tonight, toting his guitar and fantastic collection of bitingly sharp songs. Bern's unique style has been compared to Bob Dylan, Lenny Bruce, Arlo Guthrie and Elvis Costello.

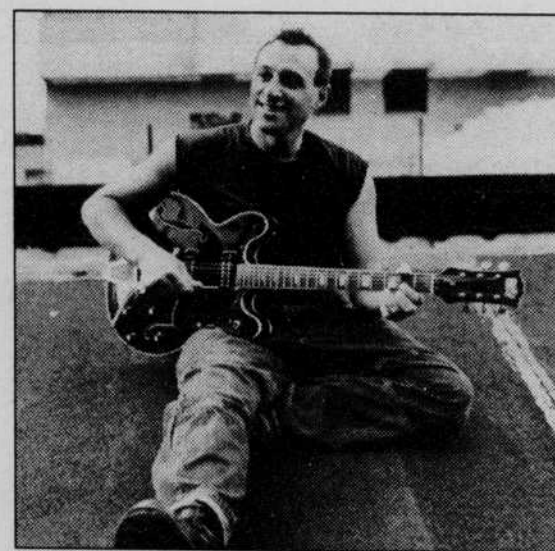
With songs covering all manner of pop culture happenings — from the potential of time travel to chance moments in history to ironic messianic proclamations — Bern has gained national attention and critical praise for his work.

His most recent full-length album, "Fleeting Days," was released in March and is his eighth record since his debut in 1996.

Although originally from Iowa, Bern tours heavily throughout the country. He last visited Eugene for a show at Sam Bond's Garage in April 2002.

Bern will appear at Café Paradiso, located at 115 W. Broadway. The show begins at 8 p.m. and tickets are \$11.50 in advance and \$13 at the door.

— Steven Neuman



Courtesy

Dan Bern will promote his album 'Fleeting Days' tonight.

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