

She's got her mojo going Continued from Page 21

"They go crazy when Mary plays the harmonica," she waffles, then excuses herself to use the powder room.

Last January, Anderson played the St. John's Pub in North Portland, and the place sold out. It was standing room only, and even the McMenamins booking agent was a little surprised.

She also packed the Hollywood Theatre last year for a multiact benefit concert she arranged to raise money for a friend who was fighting breast cancer. Anderson closed that show in a duet with Myrtle Brown of the Blues Masters, bringing the crowd to their feet.

Since Anderson has made herself unavailable, I start in on Becky Bilyeu, the owner of Touchstone and an old college friend of Anderson's. Bilyeu is more than happy to confirm the rumors: "It's totally true. She's really sexual onstage. It's a very sensual energy; people are really drawn to that."

Ha! Soon Anderson emerges from the bathroom and concedes that she might be a little sexy onstage.

"I can't help it! I get my mojo going, and then I can't stop it.

Things start happening to my body," she purrs in her deliciously throaty voice.

*It's gonna be a new day, new day, new day,
my world has changed,
my world has changed*

Consider some of the song titles on *My Famous Friend*: "Assault Me, Again!" "Nobody's Friend," "Fight!" Consider the titles on *Beautiful Morning*: "New Day," "Be Who You Are," "Nice Night."

"It's a new life," Anderson enthuses. "With the first CD, it was a fight to hold onto love, it was a fight to hold onto relationships...and I made it through it, and I met the love of my life. At some point in between, the shift occurred for me."

Anderson fell in love three years ago with Linda Williams, whom she met while performing. She describes the relationship as "a dream come true." Williams has provided much inspiration, Anderson says, "both in regard to my writing and the business.... She's the driving force behind my work."

Anderson has drawn inspiration for *Morning* from a variety of sources. Mixed in with the many "mushy love songs," there's also a lot of pride. "Be Who You Are" is about a friend of Anderson's—a gay man in denial and struggling with coming out. "What She Needs" was written at the request of a fan who, in her early 30s, had fallen in love with her best friend. Both the women were married.

"They met each other, became friends, fell in love, and both of them came out," Anderson explains. "What influences me more than anything is people and their stories. That's what all the songs are about."

Anderson is a highly enthusiastic partici-

pant in the annual California retreat put on by writer and spiritual teacher Lynn Andrews. Anderson plays music at the event during meditations and served as the event coordinator for several years. At one of Andrews' retreats, she met nationally recognized violinist Scarlet Rivera.

Rivera has toured with Bob Dylan, Tracy Chapman and the Indigo Girls, and she came to Portland to record on several of *Morning's* tracks. Anderson became very emotional watching Rivera.

"When she played it was breathtaking. There's something about her spirit that she's able to emanate in her playing. To see her in there, and she's playing my music"—Anderson gets misty even in the retelling.

"I must be premenstrual," she claims, wiping her eyes. "Anybody can play chords or notes, but to be able to actually make a connection with it and draw out what it was meant to be...you can't ask someone to do that, and you can't teach someone to do that."

Rivera, who will come back to town for the release con-

cert, experienced similar feelings working with Anderson's music.

"The songs really took on a true, deep life," Rivera told me over the phone from her home in Encino, Calif. "Some were very touching songs, so I just wanted to really deepen that.... I don't know what happened, but it happened.... This seems to be one of the best [albums] that I've done."

Rivera also emphasizes Anderson's growth on this recording compared to her first: "She made a big leap," the violinist notes.

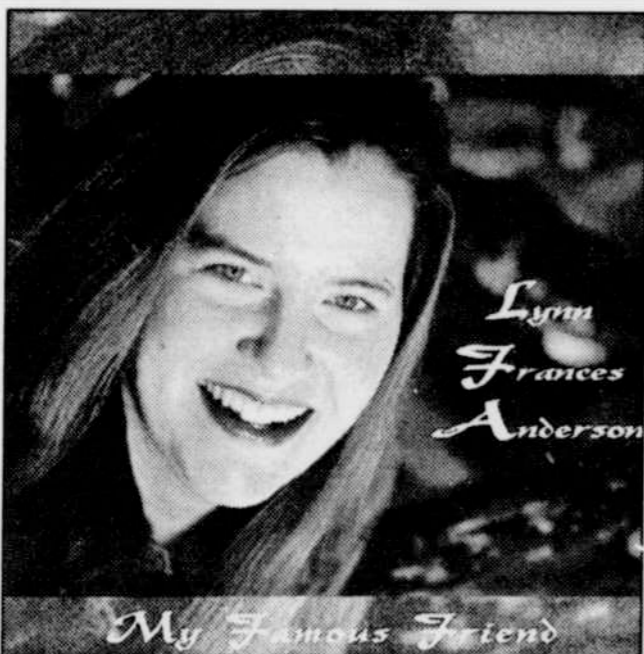
I agree. Listening to the CDs back-to-back, I hear the difference. *Morning* is sharper, more solid, better-written. Anderson hangs onto the distinctive deep and soulful voice displayed on her first CD, but even that talent

has matured.

Anderson launches into the story of how she found and recruited her sophomore release's impressive ensemble cast: Mannenbach is featured on both CDs, and Anderson refers to him as her "rock." He's helped arrange all the songs she's written in the past five years, and she can't imagine working without him. Playing second guitar to Mannenbach is Mary Curtis, who also provides that show-stopping blues harmonica.

Anderson was fortunate enough to procure the services of drummer Carlton Jackson for both albums and her live performances. Jackson is a much sought-after favorite in the jazz, big-band and blues communities. Also included in the band are Portland-area heavy hitters Holly Leer on backup vocals, cello and flute; Clark Salisbury on electric guitar;

Anderson's first CD was cathartic



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going, and then
I can't stop it.
Things start
happening
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—Lynn Frances
Anderson

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