

MUSIC

# In good company

Theresa Demarest left music to save her sanity. She came back for the same reason.

BY JAMIE BOLYARD

Two years ago Portland lesbian musician Theresa Demarest put down her guitar and gave up music. The do-it-yourself singer/songwriter was burned out. "I reached a point where I had to stop or I was going to go nuts," she admits. "That was hard—really hard—because it's in my blood. It's why I'm on the planet. It's how I live and breathe. It's my vehicle for connecting with the universe."

The universe welcomes Demarest back this year with her eighth album, *Roll on Down*, from Joshua Records, her own label.

Demarest, whose music is a combination of folk and jazz with a little pop and blues sprinkled in, feels this one is her best project so far. She recorded and has been performing live with her band, Good Company, made up of some of Portland's finest musicians, including Grammy-nominated pianist Janice Scroggins, vocalist Linda Hornbuckle, guitarist Tim Ellis, the talented Renato Caranto on sax and Thera Memory on horns.

Good Company is no doubt one reason Demarest is so excited about *Roll on Down*. "These guys, I've been with them for 10 years almost, and they're wonderful. They're wonderful musicians," she exclaims.

When Demarest stopped doing music, she jumped on her Honda 1800cc VTX Retro and headed south for California. She drove her bike around the Golden State for a year.

"One day I got a call from my nephew, who I hadn't seen since he was a little boy," Demarest explains. "He had fond memories of me.... He called me out of the blue, and we talked for hours and laughed."

That phone call inspired her to write "Jonnie D & Me," a song featured on *Roll on Down*. The title track was also inspired by her road trip.

"I'm just doing the best I can," Demarest confides, "and I hope it comes out in my music. That's the place where I hope people get who I am."

Demarest is one busy woman. In addition to promoting her newest release, she is in the process of producing Keiko's Legacy Tour, an educational music and multimedia show that highlights the journey of Keiko, the recently deceased orca star. Keiko was the second longest living captive male orca in history and the first to swim free following his captivity.

"By not taking care of our oceans, we're not taking care of ourselves," Demarest asserts. "Keiko's legacy is about survival of our planet."

The singer's involvement with Keiko began when she visited the whale at the Oregon Coast Aquarium from 1996 to 1998. She felt a special connection and immediately began writing "Keiko's Dream," an instrumental tune featuring some amazing whale-like sounds on guitar.

Soon thereafter, Demarest produced the CD *Keiko's Dream*, recorded live at Portland Center for the Performing Arts. She then began collaborating with the Free Willy-Keiko Foundation presenting Keiko's Dream Tour, a program that combines music, arts and science to raise awareness about Keiko's experience. She has spent a considerable part of the

past few years presenting this concert in schools and communities throughout the Northwest.

When Keiko died last December, Demarest and the foundation went to work updating the show. Along with her music, it will include a science presentation and video footage of Keiko swimming in the ocean.

"To be able to take your music and have it have a higher purpose," she beams, "what kind of a connection is that?"

And Demarest is a woman in touch with her higher purpose. In the '80s she survived a bout of cancer only to have it return five years later. The second time she was told she

only had six months to live. That was 14 years ago.

"It's a scary thing to be told you're not going to be on the planet in six months. And, frankly, I don't know why I'm still here," she confesses. "But, I'll tell you, I started doing what I wanted to do. It helped me get the courage to do what I needed to do.... So I started doing my music, which is one of the primary focuses of my life force."

Demarest's life is kind of like her music—you just can't put it in a box. She's a former nun, a former critical care nurse, a mother and a lesbian in a 15-year relationship with her partner, Nola. "And we haven't even gotten started yet!" she adds.

With a new CD to promote and a national tour to produce, Demarest has many opportunities to keep on doing what she loves. "I have hope. I have exciting projects to be involved in, and I have a lot of personal satisfaction in my life." ☐

Visit THERESA DEMAREST, and get updates on Keiko's Legacy Tour at [www.theresacd.com](http://www.theresacd.com).

JAMIE BOLYARD is a Portland free-lance writer.

Theresa Demarest comes back to music with *Roll on Down*

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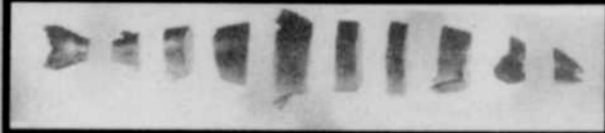
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### REVIEW

ROLL ON DOWN  
Theresa Demarest •  
Joshua Records

dare you to listen to Portland singer/songwriter Theresa Demarest's eighth CD, *Roll on Down*, in a bad mood.

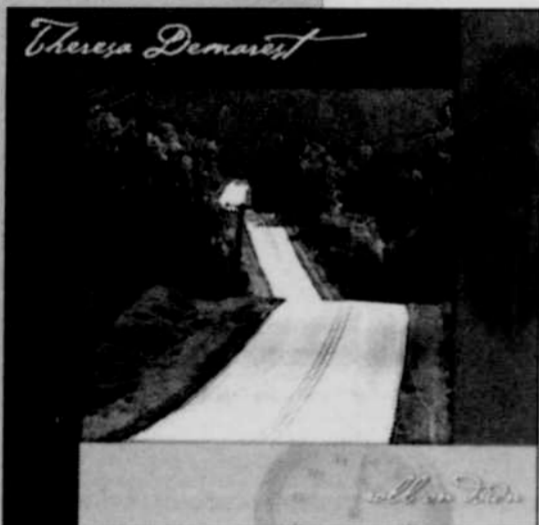
The album features an eclectic menu: jazz-flavored songs with dashes of folk, a few pinches of pop and hints of genre-defying musical mysteries thrown in. Good Company—Demarest's longtime band—contributes to this diverse and refreshing musical blend.

Demarest shines brightest on her pure jazz tunes. Standout track "I'm Flyin'," written for her partner of 15 years, will have you bobbing your head and tapping your toes. If you need a folk fix, just take a listen to the title track about motorcycle riding on the open road.

"Odd Things," somewhat of a protest song about life, cannot be categorized. And this, combined with Demarest's simple yet profound lyrics, is what makes her music great.

Listen to *Roll on Down* and watch your spirit roll on down the pathway to a hope-filled, peaceful new state.

—JB ☐



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—Theresa Demarest