

Continued from Page 21

to be as sexy as it could be. And dangerous—because I know it's dangerous for some people to think that gay people actually get married and live normal lives. So I wanted to write a song that people could relate to, straight or gay, and realize, "Oh my gosh, I know how that feels!"

JR: Your liner notes ask fans to stop everything they're doing for an hour and listen to the album from beginning to end—which is so hard for some people to do in this ADD, iPod-shuffle culture. What albums inspired you to try this approach?

ME: I wanted to have an album to take people out of that—to give themselves the time to sit down: "Look, you can do this, you can take an hour. If you can't sit, then drive somewhere. Just be with yourself and your breath for an hour!"

I remember listening to Bruce Springsteen's *Born to Run* [and] Rickie Lee Jones' *Pirates*. You remember when we were much younger and we'd just sit—all you'd have to do is turn the record over. It was a journey, and it took you somewhere. All the Beatles records. The Eagles. It's an art form, and I didn't want to lose that art form. I wanted to say: "Look, this is an art piece. Please try to enjoy it once, the whole thing."

JR: You also ask listeners to "help yourself to a glass of wine or a smoke." Can I assume you're talking about weed and not tobacco?

ME: Yes, I would be on the record as a weed girl. I'm definitely not a tobacco girl.

JR: Because medicinal marijuana is already a hot election-year topic, can I ask if pot helped you through chemo?

ME: Oh Lord, yes. I have come out and talked about it to Stone Phillips! I don't know how anyone gets through chemotherapy without marijuana, because the chemotherapy makes you so nauseous, and you don't want to eat anything, and it puts you in such discomfort and pain. Yeah, you can take pain relievers and something for the diarrhea, but then you have to take something for the constipation, and you're taking five or six different things with all the different side effects.

And you know what? I can smoke something

straight from the earth, and I get no side effects; it takes care of every single one of those things. So I'm a big medicinal marijuana girl.

JR: Speaking of politics, you've now written two songs about high-profile real people, "Imagine That" and "Scarecrow." As a parent, how has it felt to write these songs and then come face to face with grieving mothers like Cindy Sheehan and Judy Shepard?

ME: Oh, man. When you are a parent, it gets you in a place that you've never wanted to be got. Just the thought of losing your child—forget it. You know there are no words in any language to describe a person who has lost their child? You have a widow, you can be an orphan, but there's no word to describe that. And it's understandable; it's not supposed to be. So as a mother with four children, even getting close to that, it breaks a part of you inside.

JR: Speaking of families, you and Tammy Lynn have helped put a high-profile face on gay parenting. Here in Oregon we've seen a great deal of ignorance surrounding the pregnant trans father who lives in Bend, so obviously we've got a long way to go before everyone embraces nontraditional families. How have you seen things change since you came forward about the unusual nature of your family?

ME: Oh my gosh, so much. Sometimes I think we as a community need to stand up, give ourselves a minute, pat ourselves on the back and go, "Wow, we're in the trenches right now, but look how far we've come!" When I was a young adult, the word marriage—no way! Gay marriage was weird! Uh-uh. We wanted to be way outside the



Etheridge celebrates her Oscar win for "I Need to Wake Up," from the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, which was named Best Original Song in February 2007.

norm. We were different, we were estranged.

And yet we have grown up, and my generation has said: "You know what? We're gay, we're American, we work, we want families, we want the same thing as everybody else." And I think we've come a long way doing that and walking through and just staying the course and saying,

"Look, we're people, and it's all about love."

JR: To go back even further, I'd like to talk about how you felt right before coming out. The other day I heard your song "I Run for Life" on the supermarket Muzak, and now Ellen DeGeneres tops Oprah Winfrey as the most re-

the other. Basically, we just keep ascending, we keep moving up.

JR: You also must've opened many minds when a billion viewers saw you thank your wife on the Oscars. What was that experience like, and did you ever think that a song from an eco-documentary could beat the *Dreamgirls* juggernaut?

ME: I know! I sort of felt sorry for the gay community at that moment. Sorry, guys!

That was really something special, because I grew up, just like any good gay person, watching the Oscars every year and just loving the whole entertainment—that moment when you can say thank you and have that 45 seconds to talk to the whole world. And I had that dream, absolutely. That was sort of the epitome of Hollywood to me.

So getting involved with Al Gore and this film, I had no idea. First of all, he said, "Will you write a song for my slide show?" I thought, "This is going to be something in high schools." So it truly was the furthest thing from my mind where it ended up, yet the journey was so sweet and beautiful—seeing that film change the world! Now I'm hooked on changing the world, man. That's the biggest high I've ever been on.

And it culminating in an Oscar [presented by] Queen Latifah and John Travolta—the funny thing was I was like, "OK, I'm gonna thank my wife and my kids." I say "wife" so often now, I don't even think about it when I say it. So when I said it in the speech, the audience applauded, and I thought, "Yeah, she's a great gal!"

Then I realized, "Oh, no, they're not used to hearing 'wife' from women, and that's what that's for." I just kind of forgot for a moment there.

JR: I saw you campaign for Al Gore in Portland in 2000, and since you're close friends with the Gores, did you ever try to convince him to make another run for president?

ME: I talked to him, because I saw what was happening. He looked at me and said, "Melissa, I have run for president four times, and it is a



From left, Etheridge shares a laugh with former Vice President Al Gore, actor Kevin Spacey and singer KT Tunstall backstage at the Nobel Peace Prize Concert last December in Oslo, Norway.

spected figure on television. Basically I'm wondering: Did you ever see this day coming?

ME: This is the someday that we always talked about. And I know we're gonna get marriage when we all realize the equality of all of us. It's gonna be a no-brainer.

Yeah, I felt like I was in Hollywood at a very special time when all of us gay people kind of found each other, and we were like: "You go. No, you go out. No, you come out!" And we all kind of just jumped in, one after

Live Long. Live Strong. Get Tested.

Free Walk-In HIV Testing ... and more!

Anonymous and Needle-Free
Results in one week or 20 minutes

Monday Nights 5:30 to 7:30
Washington County Health Clinic - Beaverton
12550 SW 2nd (between Hall & Watson)

Men's Nights
are Monday
Nights

For more information, call us at 503-846-4734
or check out www.co.washington.or.us/hiv



¡Se Habla Español!

World Beat

Soul
Oldies
Folk
Cajun
New Age
Soundtracks
Lounge
Comedy
Spoken Word

MUSIC MILLENNIUM



MUSIC

MILLENNIUM

EAST PORTLAND • 32nd & E Burnside St. • 231-8926

Rock

Women's
Jazz
Gospel
Country
Bluegrass
Musicals
Big Band
Reggae
and more...