



U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., thanks Etheridge and Human Rights Campaign president Joe Solmonese after Logo's gay-focused presidential debate in August 2007.

soul-sucking experience." I said, "Well, good, I understand that."

The thing that happened to him in 2000—c'mon. That he even pulled himself together and went back and did what he loved and changed the world anyway—he's a great story that we'll tell our children about.

JR: What was it like serving on the panel for Logo's gay-focused presidential debate?

ME: That was so crazy! First of all, I was so honored. If nothing else, our movement has informed, political, powerful people in it, yet I also knew I am a famous person, and I know that that brings people to watch things. I said: "You know what? I'm grateful for my celebrity. I realize that if it's gotten me a place on this panel, I hope to represent my community fully and maybe ask some of the personal questions that might not get asked." It was a really eye-opening experience.

JR: Did it sway your views?

ME: Yes, it did. I sort of went in, "Give me Hillary, give me Obama, give me Clinton-Obama, whatever." I was very impressed with Obama. He was the only one who came backstage to my dressing room, shook my hand, gave me a book, signed it, said: "Pleasure to meet you. I appreciate everything you do." Things like that, I think, go a long way.

Then confronting Hillary and saying: "Look, I was there in '92. We were gonna be free, and we were the first ones you guys sold down the river!" Then I was surprised that her answer was: "Well, Melissa, you know, having gone through cancer,

things just can't happen quick enough for you." So that kind of turned me off to Hillary.

And then hearing Dennis Kucinich just get out there and say: "Hello? It's not equality. Period." Why can't my Democratic leader, who I know feels this way, why can't they step out and just do what's right?

I know that our movement is not about that one thing, marriage, yet it symbolizes so much, you know? You're either really for equality or you're not.

JR: I just saw Martin Scorsese's documentary about the Rolling Stones in which Mick Jagger said in a mid-'60s interview that they might be around for a few years at most. I'd like to ask you the same question: How long do you see yourself performing?

ME: Well, see, I watch the Rolling Stones, and I think, "As long as they can do it, I can do it!" I watch them, I watch Bruce, and as long as I can do it and remain with my dignity intact—I mean, I'm not gonna get up there and shake my booty and try to compete with the youngsters, but as long as people enjoy the music, then I'm gonna be there doing it. **10**

MELISSA ETHERIDGE performs 8 p.m. Aug. 23 at Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, 1037 S.W. Broadway. Tickets are \$35-\$100 from Ticketmaster.

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. E-mail him at jim@justout.com.

THE ESSENTIAL ETHERIDGE

Melissa Etheridge (1988)

Out of a quagmire of late '80s music comes a young woman from Kansas



who wears her heart on her sleeve and isn't afraid of the power chord or power ballad, drawing immediate

comparisons to Bruce Springsteen and Janis Joplin. "Similar Features" and "Bring Me Some Water" are gritty, raw, guitar-driven songs that anchor a solid album.

Brave and Crazy (1989)

No sophomore slacking here. Etheridge's second release is chock full of gutsy, soul-bearing rock and is good from start to finish. Stand-out tracks are "No Souvenirs," "Baby You Can Sleep While" and "Let Me Go."



Never Enough (1992)

The cover—showing Etheridge topless with a guitar strapped across her back—is an image that will be forever emblazoned in the minds of a whole generation of lesbians. Not only could she make great rock 'n' roll, but also she was now comfortable in her own skin and, well, sexy as hell. Her song "Heavy" won a Grammy for Best Female Vocal Rock Performance.



Yes I Am (1993)

This multiplatinum release turned Etheridge into such a household name, even straight boys can sing verses of "I'm the Only One." *Yes I Am* received massive radio and MTV play, particularly the video for "Come to My Window" star-



ring Juliette Lewis having a breakdown and looking creepy weird; the hit single scored Etheridge another Grammy.

Your Little Secret (1995)

Dyke drama is all over this album, with allusions to love triangles, stalking old lovers and co-dependent mishaps. Wickedly playful at points. A solid album with a terrific title track.



Breakdown (1999)

Etheridge's song "Scarecrow" was a stunning tribute to Matthew Shepard.



The entire album is darker and more introspective, with less melodrama and, unfortunately, lacking some of the visceral punch of her earlier work.

Skin (2001)

The consummate heartbreak CD. Still reeling from a messy breakup with longtime partner Julie Cypher, Etheridge does more than wear her heart on her sleeve this time: She pretty much rips it out of her chest and stomps on it. Heartbreak makes for good rock 'n' roll. The stellar song "Love Please" says it all with the line "This one's gonna hurt like hell."



Lucky (2004)

Lucky to be in love again, but not as lucky on the charts: Leading a life of domestic bliss with wife Tammy Lynn Michaels on the Hollywood A-list, Etheridge recorded an album that wasn't much of a commercial success or all that memorable.



—Dale Schiff

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