



# QUEEN OF THE ROAD

BY RON BALDWIN

Maria Muldaur has endured countless tours over her six-decade career and is looking forward to many more. Asked about being on the road long after most of her contemporaries have abandoned touring, she didn't hesitate. "This is what I do, I mean, what else would I do?" Muldaur said.

Last Saturday in Nehalem, Muldaur and her Red Hot Bluesiana Band did just that, putting on a sold out show at the North County Recreation District Performing Arts Center.

The show is part of a tour spanning across the West, and it's the six-time Grammy nominated singer's first since the pandemic. It was obvious that she and her band were pleased to be on the road and performing for live audiences again.

At this cozy, 300 seat theater, Muldaur's show revealed some of the reasons why she has retained her popularity. The singer's first set included songs written by many of her favorite composers, including Memphis Minnie, Bessie Smith and Allen Toussaint.

In announcing each song, she showed her knack for storytelling, working to draw the audience in and share some favorite music.

But the band had a favor to ask first. After the group's tour bus broke down, Muldaur worried that the band wouldn't be able to make the next tour date in Tacoma, Washington. "And people wonder why I sing the blues!" Muldaur exclaimed. Just before intermission, she appealed to the crowd. "Does anyone in the audience have a vehicle or two and can help us get to our next gig in Tacoma tomorrow?" Later, she revealed that help had materialized and that a bus repair was scheduled for Monday.

Muldaur's second set rolled out some of the straight ahead blues and bawdy material she's known for with "Loan Me Your Husband" by Blue Lu Barker and her own hit "It Ain't the Meat It's the Motion." Muldaur is also known for her efforts to showcase songs by early entertainers whose songs have been buried in history. With each song, the audience was drawn more to the artist, creating the oneness of performer and beholder that artists seek but few can attain.

"I'm not known as a songwriter," Muldaur said just a few songs into the first set, "but I wrote this song. I had just been vaccinated for the second time and I was driving home," she added. Muldaur recruited her longtime collaborator, guitarist Craig Caffall, to finish writing the song with her. He nailed the intro to "I'm Vaccinated and I'm Ready for Love," which proved to be the hit of the night.

Toward the end of the second set, Caffall started a guitar riff without an introduction and the audience, recognizing it, began to cheer. "And here's the one I know you've all been waiting for," Muldaur said. The band began to cook as she trilled "Midnight at the Oasis," the 1973 hit that made Muldaur a household name. The crowd roared their approval as she continued to finish the show with another of her iconic hits, "Don't You Feel My Leg."

It is humbling to meet a legend, but while Muldaur has secured her legacy in music, in the several hours I spent with her I found her friendly, fun and down to earth, a real star with a real heart.



Photos by Ron Baldwin

**TOP:** Maria Muldaur performs at the North County Recreation District Performing Arts Center. **ABOVE:** Muldaur sings in Nehalem.