

# Queen of Soul on Higher Level

Franklin busy with new label, CD and special

The Queen still reigns. Soul icon Aretha Franklin is thriving these days and preparing for the June release of her first album on Aretha Records, her own label.

Franklin herself took the helm as producer of the CD. She was particularly proud of the many notable collaborations featured on the disc.

Country and pop star Faith Hill, gospel sensation Smokie Norful and composer Ollie Wilson all make guest appearances on the album.

In a special tribute to late legend Ray Charles, former Temptations lead singer Dennis Edwards joins Franklin for "Friends," a song, that, before he passed away, Charles had requested that Franklin sing.

Franklin's previous album, 2003's "So Damn Happy," on Arista, received a royal reception from fans

and critics, and her 2003 concert tour, "The Queen is On," sold out venues from coast to coast.

In addition to the new label and album, Franklin hosted a very special tribute at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. on March 18 to American popular music of the 1940s.

Franklin's luminous career has spanned more than four decades. She's received countless awards and honors for her contribution to American music, including a Kennedy Center Honor, 16 Grammy awards, a Grammy Legend award, a Grammy Lifetime Achievement award, and five American Music Awards.

In 1987, she was the first woman inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and in 1979, Franklin received her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



Queen of Soul Aretha Franklin has a new record label and album, and recently headlined a Kennedy Center tribute to American music of the 1940s.



DeLonde Bell stars in the local production of 'Jesus Christ Superstar.'

## 'Jesus Christ Superstar' Rises Locally

A vibrant operetta that's a fusion of styles, rock rhythm and narrative, "Jesus Christ Superstar" remains a powerful production.

Locally, the Gresham Little Theater and the Scarlett Ballroom of northeast Portland will host performances by Radiant Theatre of this touching musical.

With characters including Mary Magdalene, Pontius Pilate, Herod Antipas and Judas Iscariot, ancient, sacred themes are fused with modern political history. The journey follows Jesus Christ in his last seven days of life—from breaking bread at The Last Supper to leaving him at the cross.

Radiant Theatre is a non-profit community ensemble always look-

ing for board members to further their mission of lighting up the world with song.

Performances will take place on April 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, and 24 at the Gresham Little Theater, 30639 S.E. Bluff Rd. in Gresham. For reservations, call 503-618-2640. Performances at the Scarlett Ballroom, 700 N.E. Dekum, will be held April 29 and 30, and May 1, 6, 7, and 8. For reservations, call 503-502-8261.

For all performances, times are 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. on Sundays. Tickets are \$15 adult, \$8 under 18. There is a free pay-what-you-can preview on Thursday, April 14 at the Gresham Little Theatre.

Visit [www.radianttheatre.org](http://www.radianttheatre.org).

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