

Everything Sundry July 2013

Kathy Sands-Boehner

GETTING TO KNOW CARRIE FERGUSON

The Valley Advocate got it right when they wrote about Carrie Ferguson: "Devilishly catchy folk-pop....infectious joy." I couldn't have put it any better. When you listen to Carrie, you hear the joy she is exuding and it is infectious. Carrie makes western Massachusetts her home these days and she's delighted to have been chosen as one of this year's Emerging Artists at Falcon Ridge Folk Festival in Hillsdale, New York. Falcon Ridge is celebrating its 25th anniversary the first weekend in August and the Emerging Artist showcase is always one of the highlights of the festival. The musicians are chosen by a three-member jury and are given the opportunity to perform two songs (not to exceed ten minutes).* The audience votes for their favorites and three or four acts are asked to return to the main stage the following year.

The story about how you came to learn how to play piano is pretty fascinating. Despite the character flaws of the piano in your home, you still managed to be able to become quite proficient on the instrument. Care to tell us how much you loved that piano?

Yeah, I loved that piano. After I moved out it stayed in the house for about 14 years and nobody played it but me when I came to visit....then my parents gave it to the musical-genius college guy across the street and it starred in his electronica-bluegrass recordings for 8 years until he finally moved to Portland, taking it with him, last January. Just before he left my mom offered to take it back because she'd started playing the cello and needed to work out parts...but he must have really loved it because even though it was HUGE and HEAVY, he hauled all the way up to Portland. Until then, when I visited my parents, I could see my piano through the living room window just sitting over there and it was kind of weird, like seeing your ex-lover in public and both of you pretending not to notice each other, and everyone else going along with it even though they all secretly wish things were the way they used to be.

Along the way you learned how to play guitar....when did that occur?

I started playing guitar in 2000...and I am DEFINITELY still learning. I want to be Jim Henry when I grow up.

Who did you listen to as you were growing as a musician?

My parents had mostly jazz and classical records, plus a few folk records. We listened to Simon and Garfunkel's Bridge Over Troubled Water; Odetta's Greatest Hits, one record by the Kingston Trio, one record by Peter Paul and Mary, Gilbert Sullivan's Greatest Hits, and the Beatles' Abbey Road. Then in 1984 my brother sent in one of those offers from the back of Rolling Stone where you give them a dime and you get 10 free cassette tapes and agree to buy 10 more over the next 2 years. My parents were appalled when they found out and made the company let him off the hook because he was only 11. He got all the greatest hits tapes by the big 80's artists: Madonna, Howard Jones, Michael Jackson, Culture Club, Laura Brannigan, etc. 80's music was HUGE for

Interview - Everything Sundry July 2013

me....I loved the melodies and all the drama. Later in my 20's it was the Indigo Girls, Tracy Chapman, Suzanne Vega, Enya, the Bulgarian Choir ladies....and Elvis Costello.

Tell us about your early songs. What did you choose to write about?

In middle school and high school in the 80's I was writing songs but I didn't know I was "song-writing." I tried to emulate the pop I listened to. I wrote about drug use and broken heartedness and love-angst....and NONE of it was stuff I'd actually experienced yet. I also wrote a song about the murder that happened down the block.

I loved the story about the creation and long gestation period/ delivery of your first CD, Riding on the Back of the Wind. You went to California to work on the CD with your brother—working fastidiously for a week or more—only to run out of time and to return to Massachusetts to finish it after totally reworking it. The end result wasn't exactly what you had in mind at the beginning, was it? In retrospect, are you glad that it took so long and that the tone and timbre of the album is so different than was originally planned?

I'm definitely happy with how the songs turned out (though of course there are things I would do differently now). That record took about 2.5 years to complete. In a way I'm having a similar experience with this new record because due to funding limitations and un-foreseen scheduling challenges, it's taking MUCH longer than I'd planned. It's a little stressful because it was crowd-funded and I told folks it would be out Spring 2013...and now it's more like January 2014. BUT, that said, I think (hope) people are going to love it. I do!

Tell us about your forthcoming CD, The List of Whales. What's the title mean? How is this record different than your previous one?

This record is a bit more produced than the last one, with more complicated string and horn arrangements. It's produced by Garrett Sawyer (Northfire Recording Studios) who is really gifted...I think his ideas are so beautiful.

One night a couple of years ago I was talking to my girlfriend who runs a nature-based pre-school. She was telling me about a project she and the kids were working on, researching whales ancient and current, and writing them all down, basically a list of whales...she was very passionate about it. Later I was writing and the phrase List Of Whales just kept coming up...I liked the idea of a list of whales being written as sort of a love song, a way of letting your love and tenderness for your lover connect you to the larger world, especially the natural world...and how there's such a vulnerability and urgency in that because we are literally in danger of losing the natural world...but that openness and intimate connection is something we must experience if there is to be any hope of changing things positively. To me the whale is such a mysterious, miraculous, massive creature, a great symbol for love and strength and fragility. So, it was a song first and it seemed like the best name for this record, especially since whales are mentioned at least twice on the album and water shows up everywhere.

And how much fun was making your video for "Girls Like Me"? And how perfect is it that the video coincides with the Supreme Court ruling DOMA as unconstitutional?

Interview - Everything Sundry July 2013

Making "Girls Like Me" was a blast! The song was released in 2010 and I've always wanted to do a video for it. Because of Prop 8 and DOMA being up in the Supreme Court, this seemed like the ideal time to do it. I did a Facebook invite and sent out an invitation through my mailing list. We did one big shoot with about 40 + people and then several other little shoots to get the cameo shots. People were amazing....especially the day of the big group shot it was like a big party...people were really excited to be part of creating something that sent a joyful, positive message about same-sex marriage and GLBT rights.