

Blue Ridge Back Roads – 5/06
Covers Southwestern Virginia and Northwestern North Carolina

Jefferson brings folk sounds to Wolf's Lair, Smith Park

By Joel Frady

MOUNT AIRY — Singer/songwriter Christy Jefferson will be making a quick stop in Surry County — sandwiched between shows in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania — to perform two local shows. Jefferson, who describes her music as a mix of folk, cabaret, rock and pop, will perform at The Wolf's Lair in Dobson on Saturday, May 20, and at the Robert Smith Park in Mount Airy on May 21.

The visit will mark the third time that Jefferson has visited the Surry County area, and the first time that she has performed at the Robert Smith Park. Ann Vaughn, executive director of the Gilmore-Smith Foundation, said that she saw Jefferson at The Wolf's Lair and wanted to host a performance at the park.

"I loved her style," Vaughn said. "She's very young and enthusiastic." Vaughn added that she looks forward to Jefferson's performance "because she represents a genre of music that we have not had before in our park, and I like to do a variety of musical styles and I wanted to bring something unique and different to our music series."

Jefferson, too, is looking forward to her visit.

"I love the folks there," she said. "I actually had, like, dreams of living down there. ... Everyone is so warm and kind and heartfelt. Up here, everyone's in a hurry, and people aren't trusting of one another."

During her visit, she'll be performing solo shows at both The Wolf's Lair and the Robert Smith Park, though she also performs concerts in a duo format and some in a full-band format. She will be bringing her style — which she describes as a "very eclectic mix of folk, rock, cabaret (a lot of cabaret) with a touch of blues and funk — to the shows.

"People say it's quirky at times," she said of her music, noting that her biggest influences have been Tori Amos, Billy Joel, Elton John, Ben Folds, Jodi Mitchell and her favorite, The Counting Crows.

Though some of her influences are more modern than others, music has been a moving force in Jefferson's life since childhood. She grew up in Coopersburg, Pa., and said that she remembers being "very moved" by music she was listening to with her dad.

Though she had grown up with music, it wasn't until she took a trip to France that she began seriously considering music as a career.

"We were there studying, taking French classes, and there were kids from all over the world there," Jefferson said. "This one French guy let me borrow his guitar ... and I wrote a song one night with one of my sister's poems. We had to get up early the next morning, but I had to play it for her ...

"When I finished, she was just really moved," Jefferson continued. "Her breath kind of went away for a minute, which was different. I hadn't had that kind of intimate moment before." She added that when she looked up, she noticed that many people had come out of their rooms and were in the room listening to her.

"It was a destiny moment," she said. "Something felt so right inside of my soul and I knew that things weren't ever quite going to be the same."

After originally going to Kutztown University in Kutztown, Pa., to major in graphic design — which the college had a 100 percent job placement rate in — Jefferson decided to switch to music.

“I wanted to pursue music,” she said of the decision. “Music was what I wanted to do, and I was just doing the graphic design because I was good at it ... and I knew I would be able to get a job to support the music. But ultimately, I knew it wasn’t where my heart was.”

She graduated in May 2002 with a bachelor of music, focusing on getting her solo career off the ground, as well as promoting her EP “Perspectives, Confessions and Amend-ments.”

Professionally, things were falling into place for Jefferson before an incident in New York City in February 2004 left her without instruments or any musical equipment. She was in town to do a show at CBGB’s 313 Gallery in the city, a place where many musicians have gotten their start in the last few decades, when she discovered that all her equipment had been stolen from her trunk.

“It stops you dead in your tracks on every level,” she said of the incident. “It’s hard not to take personally (and wonder) ‘What’s the Big Guy trying to tell me?’

“It seemed so clear to me, up to that point, that music was my path,” she continued. “Every bone in my body resonates when that’s what I’m doing. (But) that moment, when I opened my trunk and it was totally empty, I looked in there and thought ‘this has to be a dream’ ... then the situation hit me and I kind of just crumbled.”

After a few days of depression, though, she decided to swallow her pride and send a letter to her mailing list asking for help. To her surprise, the response was tremendous.

“That provided healing in a way that I would have never expected,” she said, later adding that “within three days of sending the e-mail, I had more than enough to replace my instruments. Not only replace, but upgrade.”

Jefferson also used the experience to write the song “Comin Round,” which would prove to be a big hit. The song was voted the top song in the Musselman Triathlon Compilation CD contest, in addition to being on her 2005 live album “Live in Philly.”

Her recording career has also moved forward since then, and on April 8, 2006, she celebrated the release of her first fulllength studio album, “When Kisses Take Prisoners.”

Despite staying quite busy between her new album and her touring schedule in the Northeast, she said she’s looking forward to her North Carolina dates.

“I think that they’ll (the audiences) leave with a big smile on their face, feeling warm and enlightened,” she said, noting that “life can be as beautiful as they want it to be.”

To find out more about her performances, visit her online at www.christyjefferson.com, call The Wolf’s Lair at (336) 374-2532 or the Gilmore-Smith Foundation at (336) 789-4636.