





MUSIC

Melissa Reaves

Yozette “Yogi” Collins

Forget that Melissa Reaves grew up playing classical violin and eventually taught herself to play guitar on one with broken strings. Forget that Melissa Reaves has shared the stage with Robert Plant, Sarah MacLachlan, Doc Watson, Sheryl Crow and others. Forget that she can be obsessive compulsive. What you can't forget, especially once you hear her music, is Melissa Reaves.

Melissa Reaves' musical sound is a mix of jazz, blues and rock 'n roll, but it's her interesting vocals, her gift for musical improv, and her unpredictable approach to music that makes her memorable and supplies her a steady fan base. In fact, approaching music differently is something she prides herself on. “I try to always push the envelope,” Reaves says. “I usually try to keep exploring, maybe not with something avant garde, but maybe a different approach to something I've been playing... [to help me stay] present with a song that maybe I've been playing a long time.”

Reaves' grew up playing classical violin, but a gift from her mom led her to experiment with sounds -- and eventually to playing the guitar. “The funny thing about the guitar,” she says, “is it's something that happened to be sitting in the corner. The first instrument I held in that manner was a gift from my mom and she got me a banjo. I had my banjo and was trying to learn how to do it the best I could. [But], over the years the strings started breaking and it had three strings at one point. It sounds crazy, but I started trying different tunings and tuning it down a couple steps and exploring the different unique Eastern sounds you can get from it. I've always been into exploring different sounds.”

The same broken-strings kind of thing happened with the guitar. Reaves credits learning guitar unconventionally with her ability to have fun playing rather than get caught up in “the technical side” of playing. “I was just having fun with it, not trying to be taken seriously,” she adds.

While Reaves spent her childhood in both the High Country and in Greenville, SC, she calls Boone home. “I love Boone; it's my home, my community,” she says. “My father died when I was really young and my mother moved us here when I was four to get, I think, some head space. [Later] we moved to Greenville, SC so I could go to school down there.”

She attended Bob Jones Academy, a fundamental Christian high school. The school was strict and Reaves approached her teen years with a normal dose of teenage boundary-pushing, but she appreciates the foundation the school provided. “I'm really grateful that I went to Bob Jones quite honestly because I got a really good education,” Reaves says. “Aside from all the stuff everyone knows about Bob Jones, I was provided many great opportunities in the fine arts and I'm very grateful for that. And [I'm] very appreciate of my mother's commitment to education and the arts.”

As talented as she is, Reaves doesn't mention sharing stages with various luminaries when we speak on the phone; it's an upcoming tour she's excited about, mentioning the venues and the driving and performing involved. As an independent artist, Reaves finds it a challenge to wear the many hats needed to play music professionally -- singer/songwriter, manager, booker, driver. But, the internet, she notes, has helped open doors for independent artists. “It has made it so much more convenient to submit music for licensing for movies and commercials.”

Reaves has had good luck in those arenas, with her songs heard on various TV shows, but ultimately it's the music and Reaves' special twist her songs that makes her music special. “When you're a singer, it's really a naked feeling to start expressing your unique self vocally; it certainly doesn't happen overnight. Hopefully I'll keep exploring and push myself to the edge -- that's usually how you discover cool things.”

Do yourself a favor and discover Melissa Reaves. Log on to www.melissareaves.com for details of her April (and beyond) gigs. While you're there, read the Fan Talk to get an idea of what Melissa delivers at her shows!

