

McLachlan's latest album gives old songs new Freedom



Sarah McLachlan

By Erin Hill
THE BATTALION

Sarah McLachlan
The Freedom Sessions
Nettwerk Records
★★★★ (out of five)

"I love the *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy* recording and wouldn't change a thing, but I love these versions as reminders of where the songs started and of the various paths we wandered down to discover their identities. It was a joy watching them grow" — Sarah McLachlan

Sarah McLachlan's breakthrough eight-song EP *The Freedom Sessions* is just that — a breakthrough. It contains a multi-media track featuring over 30 minutes of music, video, photographs and information.

Those eight recordings are variations on some of the tracks from her platinum 1993 album *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy*. Many of the selections began as acoustic pieces, and were only later changed into the versions that were released with the album.

McLachlan and company toyed from the beginning of the entire album with the idea of putting out two records — one of the original

acoustic songs and another with more finely-produced or layered songs from the beginning of the recording process. That notion has come true in *The Freedom Sessions*.

The collection is a nice mix of experimentation. Some songs became more complex, while others are simplified. McLachlan tosses in some concert versions, a jam session recorded after "an evening of an immeasurable quantity of red wine" and an early demo version.

The live, fun version of "Ice Cream," one of the lighter tracks on the album, sounds just the way she performs it in concert, with her keyboardist playing bass, her drummer by her side and a heavy dose of vocal improvisation.

"Ol' 55," the only song not found on *Fumbling*, was released on the *Boys On The Side* soundtrack, and is a mellow, soulful cover of Tom Waits' traveling tune.

As a real treat, McLachlan includes two new versions of her current MTV offering "Hold On."

The song as released on *Fumbling*, is a driving, rhythmic ode to a dying lover. But one of the versions, probably the best track on the album, is a fragile piano version, with only Sarah and her keyboard.

The other version is just acoustic guitar and vocals, and has a much more folksy feel than the album's rock version.

This impressive display of McLachlan's versatility — taking one song and come up with three songs — is found repeatedly throughout the album.

She's been known to say that if a song can't stand alone with just one vocal and guitar, then it probably isn't a very good song. Well, nearly every track on this album passes that test with flying colors. No matter how she records them, changes them or experiments with them, they are a pleasure to listen to.

But it is through the addition of the multi-media track that McLachlan proves that she is ahead of her time — truly an artist who uses "breakthrough technology" in innovative ways.

The 30-minute long track is visually breathtaking, and technologically impressive. The assortment of video, audio and interview segments provides a wealth of interesting and pertinent information about McLachlan and her music.

She uses the medium to spread her message in an effective way, and sets an example that is sure to be followed by other artists in the future.

She rises above the constraints of a typical album, and finds a better way to showcase her talents, while still using the CD format.

The listener will just sit back, open-mouthed, and enjoy.

Freedom Sessions opens doors for interactive-CD technology

"Hi there. This is Sarah McLachlan. Welcome to *The Freedom Sessions*. Click on any icon to begin. Have fun ..."

ERIN HILL
ASST. OPINION EDITOR



The word slick jumps to mind. Click first on the passport icon and a photo of McLachlan doing a benefit concert in Thailand comes to the stage. Her voice starts in again, and she explains about a 1992 trip to Thailand and Cambodia, with an organization called "World Vision."

Click on the next icon, and a screen with information about World Vision appears. All the while, McLachlan's music plays in the background.

A different icon brings a screen with the covers of her albums. Further searching leads you to a song list. A highlighted song leads to the actual playing of the song and the screening of the video.

They are the same videos that MTV plays, except on your computer screen, instead of the TV.

Exploring the tour portion of the multi-media track takes you to different cities across the country where McLachlan has toured. When the photos of that particular concert appear, McLachlan tells a little about that community.

"I could talk about Minneapolis. Minneapolis is great," she says. And on the screen you see a picture of the State Theater, the Minneapolis hall she performed in.

Austin, which McLachlan describes as "amazing," is also shown through a

photo collage, and McLachlan reveals that Texas is one of her favorite places to play.

It's almost like chatting on the telephone with her, except that you are staring at vivid photographs and listening to her music while she talks.

When you click on "Vancouver, British Columbia," McLachlan tells about her homecoming there — the delight she feels in playing with a home-court advantage.

A photo collage appears, and a smiling Sarah is in the middle of the stage, in front of thousands of delirious fans.

It's unlike anything you've seen. It's unlike anything you've heard. And it won't be a secret much longer.

The package that McLachlan has put together wows even the most skeptical, bowls over even the least enthusiastic about McLachlan's music. Her multi-media track is truly visionary, and rewarding for the fan.

McLachlan will not be alone in albums like this in the future, that's for sure.

Once the word gets out to the general public that technology like this exists, and can be used in a music album, the general public won't settle for anything else.

Already, the artist formerly known as Prince has released an interactive CD-ROM program that includes snippets of performances, photos, QuickTime movies and all of the other jazz.

Others can't be far behind. The CD-

ROM multi-media track is a fan's dream, for it allows the listener to interact with the artist.

That seems to be a big push in today's world. More and more artists are using technology to connect with their fans.

Through computers they become accessible, be it Michael Stipe participating in America Online, or Aerosmith broadcasting a concert over the Internet.

Some musicians have home pages on the World Wide Web, with graphics, photos and sounds available to those who are willing to download.

The web has also become a cyber-market of sorts, with merchandise displays and catalogs available for the asking. The possibilities for sales are endless as well.

The various Internet news groups

services offer bulletin boards on every kind of performer out there, with categories like alt.music.canadian.alternative, or alt.music.progressive.

There is something for everyone, and everyone seems to be trying to get in on the action.

Something's brewing. Things are changing.

Just as they promised, the Internet and advancements in computer technology are changing the face of our society, from government to business to education.

And now to entertainment.



The home screen from the CD-ROM portion of Sarah McLachlan's CD-ROM and album.

White Heart brings unique mix of music and message to Rudder Auditorium tonight

By Shelly Hall
THE BATTALION

With a message of hope and love, White Heart, a Christian rock band, will perform tonight at 7 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium.

Rick Florien, White Heart's lead vocalist, said the band's music is similar to other classic rock bands with a message about life.

"We're musicians like everybody else," Florien said. "Our music is about life and struggles and putting into practice the love that God calls us to."

Florien said that faith forms the foundation of their music.

"The foundation is our relationship with God through his son Jesus Christ," Florien said.

An example of that foundation is in White Heart's song "70 Times Seven."

"It's all about forgiveness," Florien said. "If you let go and forgive, the freedom you feel inside is well worth the sacrifice."

Florien, who started out driving a truck for Christian singer Michael W. Smith, said he joined White Heart in 1985.

Florien said White Heart members believe in their songs because of the forgiveness they have experienced in their own lives.

"Some used drugs and alcohol and some were involved in abusive situations," Florien said. "Therefore, a lot of our songs are about the change that needs to come in our lives daily."

Because of that change, Florien said

White Heart gears its songs to people who may not know the message of hope.

"We try to write our songs for people who don't have a relationship with God," Florien said. "Our message is — it's OK to be at a place where you don't care about God — so let's talk about it."

White Heart recently signed with Curb Records, a mainstream label, and Florien said it will give more people an opportunity to hear the band's message.

"Signing with Curb Records excites me because our music will reach more people," Florien said. "They haven't asked us to change a thing."

Florien said signing on with Curb will allow larger audiences to hear the joy in their lives.

"People will hear our music and the words," Florien said. "I love where I am. I

want others to experience the joy I have because of Christ."

The Highlands, the name of White Heart's latest CD, expresses the joy about living a different life, Florien said.

"We're on the tale end of *The Highlands Tour*," Florien said. "*The Highlands* album is about seeing the world with different eyes. Change can be permanent."

Florien said the main message White Heart hopes to get across is the joy in love and forgiveness.

"It's OK to question why you even exist and its OK for people to go through a lot of different questions to answer those questions," Florien said.



White Heart performs tonight at Rudder Auditorium.

"We hope to be a catalyst for love and giving so that they may live life to the fullest."

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