

Doc's Introduction

When Alan Page, our coffee house manager, announced that he had scheduled SONiA and disappear fear for January 12th, I became curious since I'm into both songs of protest and music on themes international. My curiosity further peaked when I read a brief description about SONiA and her music that has been included in the January Folk Talk. So I decided to dig deeper by doing an internet search and sending SONiA some questions about herself, material that I had not found by Googling.

A number of clips I found heightened my curiosity:

"...One of today's most socially relevant (and gifted) songwriters..." - Frontier News Magazine"

"disappear fear's SONiA keeps her "i" small to remind herself of her place in the world. But for all her lack of ego, she is a force to be reckoned with. SONiA's work fits somewhere in the noble tradition of political folk-rock; her lyrics are audacious and original. "She writes the kind of folk anthem penned with ease and expertise not often found today." Music Monthly"



"If there was a modern-day female contemporary of Bob Dylan, one would not need to look any further than singer-songwriter SONiA to find her. The underrated singer-songwriter's acoustic compositions are often as urgent in their impassioned earnestness as the most important work in Dylan's canon...[SONiA] has finally come of age as one of today's most socially relevant (and gifted) songwriters--on par with Dylan himself." Ken Knox, *Frontier News Magazine*"

In the review that follows I will use clips for various interviews and reviews about SONiA to illustrate my introduction of SONiA and disappear fear to our 3 Rivers Folk Life Society audience. [Why rewrite something, paraphrasing the source materials, when it was well said the first time— doc.]

Since SONiA has been full time musician/songwriter/recording and visual artist for 18 years I hoped to find lots of material. From what I read, I was surprised that despite being a political activist and musically a public person, there was less information about SONiA the human being than I would have expected.



Fortunately for these days of the Web 2.0, her blogs on my space

[<http://www.myspace.com/soniaanddisappearfear>] a combination of her post cards and written tales helped create a better image of this multi-talented talented mench {human being.}

Sonia and disappear fear - Background

When SONiA and her sister CiNDY set out from Baltimore in 1987 as the original disappear fear, the act quickly became a cult favorite, garnering considerable radio play and a sizable draw of avid fans at live performances on the college, club and festival circuit. After three releases on their own label, disappear fear signed with Rounder/Philo in 1994 to release their award winning, eponymous CD featuring Janis Ian and the Indigo Girls. CiNDY opted to forego life on the road for motherhood in 1996. SONiA continued touring as a solo artist, releasing *Seed in the Sahara* and *Almost Chocolate* (both on Rounder/Philo) followed by *Me, Too* (on disappear records) and her first live solo album *Live at the Down Home* (on Winthrop Records). The two reunited for 2004's *No Bomb Is Smart*, and Cindy joins in on a couple of tracks on the new album *DF05 Live* and occasional other album tracks.



Several international tours added a more acoustic blues and world music inspired flavor to SONiA's music. Looking to further enhance her singular sound with a contemporary feel, SONiA turned to Nashville to record *No Bomb is Smart* in 2004

Although the group disappear fear has undergone numerous transformations since its inception, SONiA continues to amass a growing legion of ardent fans worldwide. In its present configuration SONiA and disappear fear consists of SONiA playing lead vocals, guitar, and harmonica and Laura Cerulli doing vocals, and percussion.

I am looking forward to adding earlier bands to my CD collection, especially those in which either her sister CiNDY participated or in which there were more jazz instruments like those that included Angela Edge a bassist and trumpet player who was part of the group for about a year.

The Music

Perhaps in a past life, SONiA was one of the original troubadours, a poet-musician roaming Europe in the 11th-13th centuries, singing songs of courtly love. She certainly is a contemporary troubadour, crooning folk songs about romantic love, often forbidden. This time around it's different; she's not talking about adultery, but rather equality.

Among her new projects, SONiA has written the soundtrack for the documentary Autumn's Harvest. Directed by Dave Marshall, the short film chronicles the life of Douglas, a migrant worker who is HIV positive: October 2006 release. SONiA currently has two CD projects underway, a blues album that's coming along at the appropriate tempo for its genre, and a CD of songs in Spanish, Hebrew, and Arabic.

"There is an exuberance and passion shining from Sonia Rutstein (SONiA) that warms an audience with good nature and humanity. "The act" is real. She is real. SONiA cares and wants us to care about the issues that bruise and abuse. Her music contains spirited protest updated for today's ears with charm and a touch of glamour. " - Roger Deitz, Sing Out Magazine

And for those of us who care about such things, SONiA performs live with her "SONiA" H Model Santa Cruz Guitar designed by SONiA and Richard Hoover, and named in her honor. [<http://santacruzguitar.com/>]

A Wandering Minstrel Indeed

Several international tours added a more acoustic blues and world inspired flavor to SONiA's music. Looking to further enhance her singular sound with a contemporary feel, SONiA turned to Nashville to record No Bomb is Smart in 2004. She gathered an impressive cast for the project including producer Craig Krampf, members of the Dixie Chicks band, Glen Worf of Mark Knoffler's band, and Ed Snodderly of O' Brother Where Art Thou, as well as sister CiNDY who contributed vocals on ten of the twelve tracks. The album was nominated for a GRAMMY in the Contemporary Folk category and for an Out Music Award for Best Female Artist. She has also received a Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation [GLAAD] Award for Best Album, *disappear fear*.



She had spent two weeks touring Israel this summer - before and after the ceasefire - traveling mostly through central Israel, but also venturing to the south and then the north, "where the bombs were. I have friends there. I have people that I love there. . . . I did a concert in a miklat, a bomb shelter. The people in the bomb shelter were unbelievably grateful and very surprised." She says of her choice to enter such a dangerous situation, "They're [firing] bombs, and rockets, and bullets. What I put into the air is music. That's good - that has to go on. . . . I named the band

The Other Half of disappear fear — About Laura

disappear fear is currently, as it has been in the past, graced with Laura Cerulli on percussion and harmonies. Laura's contribution is the perfect multifaceted complement to SONiA's vocals and guitar. In fact, Laura contributes so much sound that it's difficult to believe there's only one other person on stage with SONiA. You can hear and feel all this for yourself when SONiA & disappear fear are in concert.



Laura Cerulli is a true professional in every sense of the word. With over fifteen years experience in the music business she is a seasoned player both live and in the studio. She brings to the stage and studio a great musical sensibility combined with professional gear, professional chops, and a refreshing lack of ego. Efficiency and creativity are two of her strongest assets. For the past five years, Laura has fronted her own band, Cerulean Groove, playing mainly in MD, DC and VA. Since April 2005 Laura has been on tour as a member of SONiA & disappear fear. In between tour dates Laura keeps a busy schedule in the studio and playing fill-in gigs with other artists. She specializes in tasteful percussion and vocal support for singer-songwriters. Laura is versatile in many styles both vocally and instrumentally, yet maintains a unique "sound" all her own.

"Cerullis' drumming on her scaled-down kit, which included a djembe that she played at times with sticks rather than her hands, was notable. It was always supporting the trio with perfect timing and choice of percussive sounds. Even more impressive is the fact that Cerulli sings, and sings well, while drumming, a more difficult feat than one might imagine." -Christine LaPado, *Chico News & Review* (Review of a disappear fear show.)

"Watching the band, you know immediately you're in the presence of something exciting and new. Then Cerulli opens her mouth and the world stands still as she wrings every drop of emotion out of the lyrics with her powerful, soaring voice, forged in the fire of the blues and tempered in the cool technique of her classical training." -Bob Steele, *Baltimore Out Loud* (From a review of a Cerulean Groove show.)

...and more of what you won't find on Google —

eTALK Questions for SONiA

eTALK: *How do the everyday happiness' and anguish of the world around you affect your music?*

In Closing:

Whether singing of her love for another person or her love for humanity, SONiA's message comes across with a calm strength and beauty that transcends sexual or national dividing lines.

By Christine G.K. LaPado

[\[http://www.newsreview.com/chico/PrintFriendly?oid=oid%3A38823\]](http://www.newsreview.com/chico/PrintFriendly?oid=oid%3A38823)

**The *World* is ready to disappear fear,
a *World* that is not scared of itself and who it loves,
a *World* that is ending hunger in the many
forms that hunger exists, no one is left out.
So, tomorrow when the first rays of dawn reach
like swords of light to your eyes...
begin the day like a tango with your soul,
In Love With Life, Because You Are.**

SONiA

And SONiA is Putting her Money Where her Music Is — On February 18th, 2006, SONiA & disappear fear (USA) launched their new digital downloads page. For \$.99 users can download a selection of MP3's of over 70 songs of their catalog while simultaneously providing one meal for one starving child through the United Nations World Food Program (www.wfp.org). These and more are still available, check them out.

SONiA notes: "There are approximately 300 million chronically hungry children in the world. One hundred million of them do not attend school, and two thirds of those not attending school are girls. For a hungry child, going to school is not important, having enough food to eat is. WFP's school feeding formula is simple: food attracts hungry children to school. An education broadens their options, helping to lift them out of poverty."

For every \$.99 download from their website www.disappearfear.com, SONiA & disappear fear will donate \$.19 to the WFP, which will feed one child one meal in school. [*Folks that's more than the tithe we're usually asked to give.*]

Come out and hear SONiA at the 3RFS Coffee house, check out her and better yet get to meet and chat with this internationally acclaimed artist.

doc.