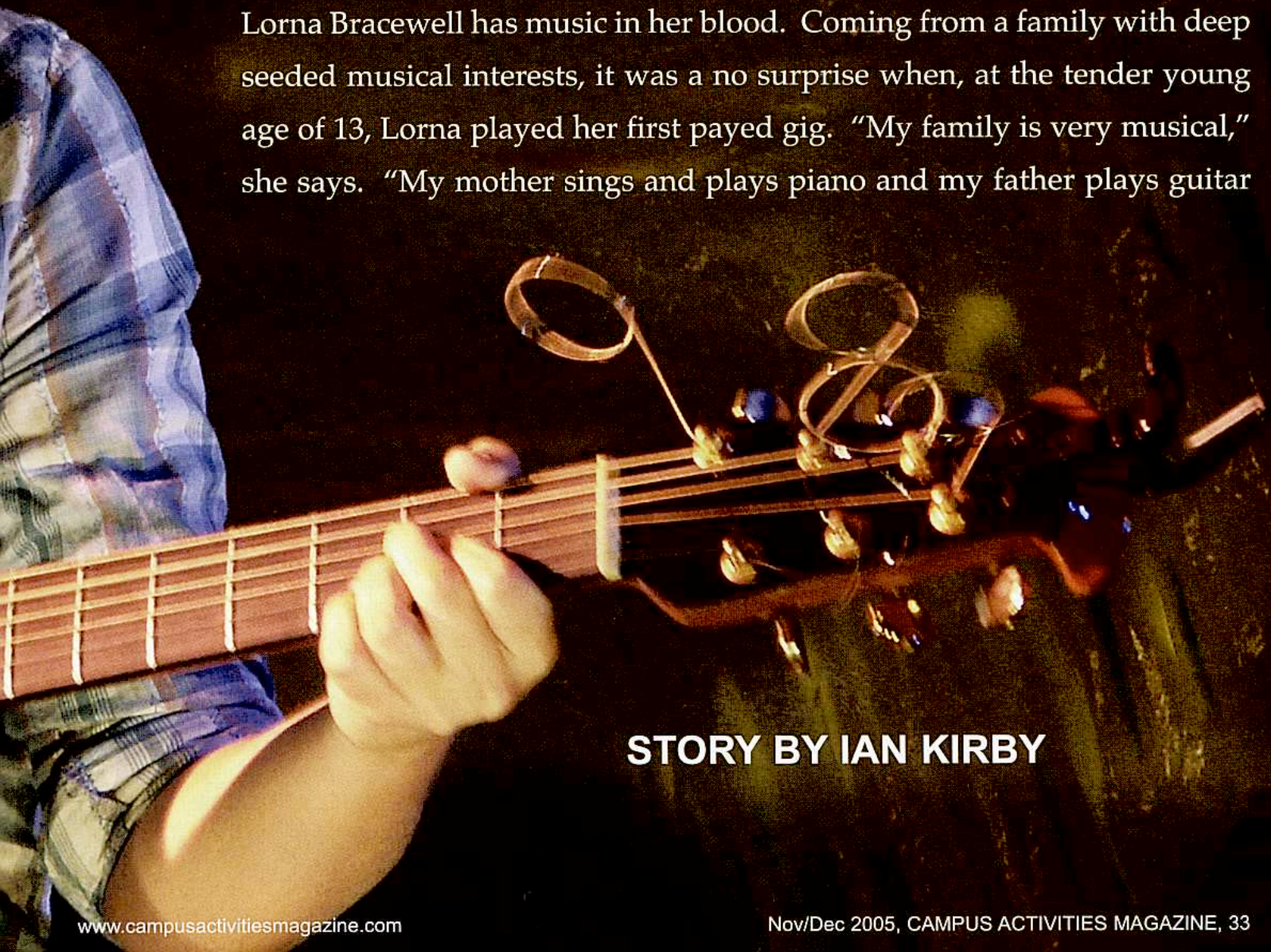




LORNA BRACEWELL

Music for the Soul

Lorna Bracewell has music in her blood. Coming from a family with deep seeded musical interests, it was a no surprise when, at the tender young age of 13, Lorna played her first payed gig. "My family is very musical," she says. "My mother sings and plays piano and my father plays guitar



STORY BY IAN KIRBY

and drums.” With an avid and passionate interest in music, he also has an epic record collection. In addition, Lorna has an older sister who is a vocalist and pianist, which left her completely surrounded by music as a child.

Her first opportunity to play in public was in her church. As a drummer in the parish’ worship band, she quickly gained experience in playing with and for other people.

When Lorna met Cliff Rice, a singer/songwriter who toured playing his own music, he immediately hired her to play drums for him. This was Lorna’s first paid gig and she flourished as a musician in the process. Eventually Cliff, who is now her manager, encouraged her to begin writing and performing her own music. “He wanted me to move out from behind the drum set and step into the light,” she says.

Fast forward to present day and Lorna has written over one hundred fifty original songs in a period of about seven years. Now twenty two, she looks back on the time she started writing as a fifteen year-old and wonders where it all came from. “I can’t help but do it. I never sit down with the intention of writing a song. There are some writers who are disciplined enough to do that,” she comments wistfully, “but not me. That is a gift I envy. My songs seem to just materialize from nowhere and flow forth. My will or my attention has nothing to do with it. I get hit anywhere, anytime and if I don’t get it down then, its gone, never to return.” Inspiration inevitably strikes Lorna at the most inopportune times she relates, most commonly while she is driving her

car. “Not really a good time to be focusing on writing lyrics.”

Lorna, as a singer/songwriter, was obviously musically shaped by the artists of the same genre she listened to coming up. Lorna says she naturally gravitates toward these musicians, but more by their song writing than the music itself. Vocal ability and musicality take a backseat to creative and inspiring lyrics in Lorna’s book. A self proclaimed Dylan fan, she is moved much more by the content of the message in a song than its delivery. Lorna sites Ani DeFranco as another influence, as she is for many women in the same profession.

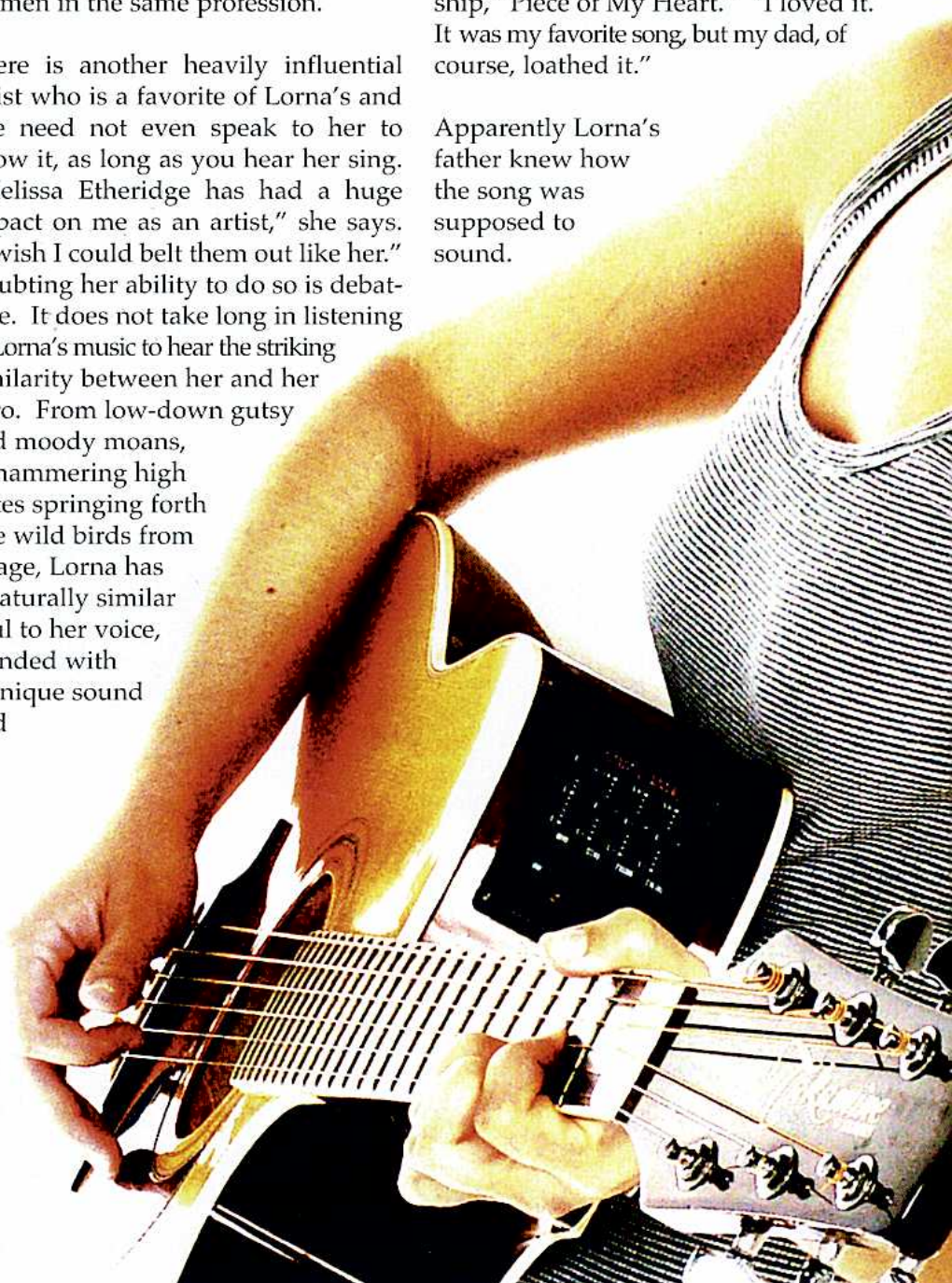
There is another heavily influential artist who is a favorite of Lorna’s and one need not even speak to her to know it, as long as you hear her sing. “Melissa Etheridge has had a huge impact on me as an artist,” she says. “I wish I could belt them out like her.” Doubting her ability to do so is debatable. It does not take long in listening to Lorna’s music to hear the striking similarity between her and her hero. From low-down gutsy and moody moans, to hammering high notes springing forth like wild birds from a cage, Lorna has a naturally similar soul to her voice, blended with a unique sound and

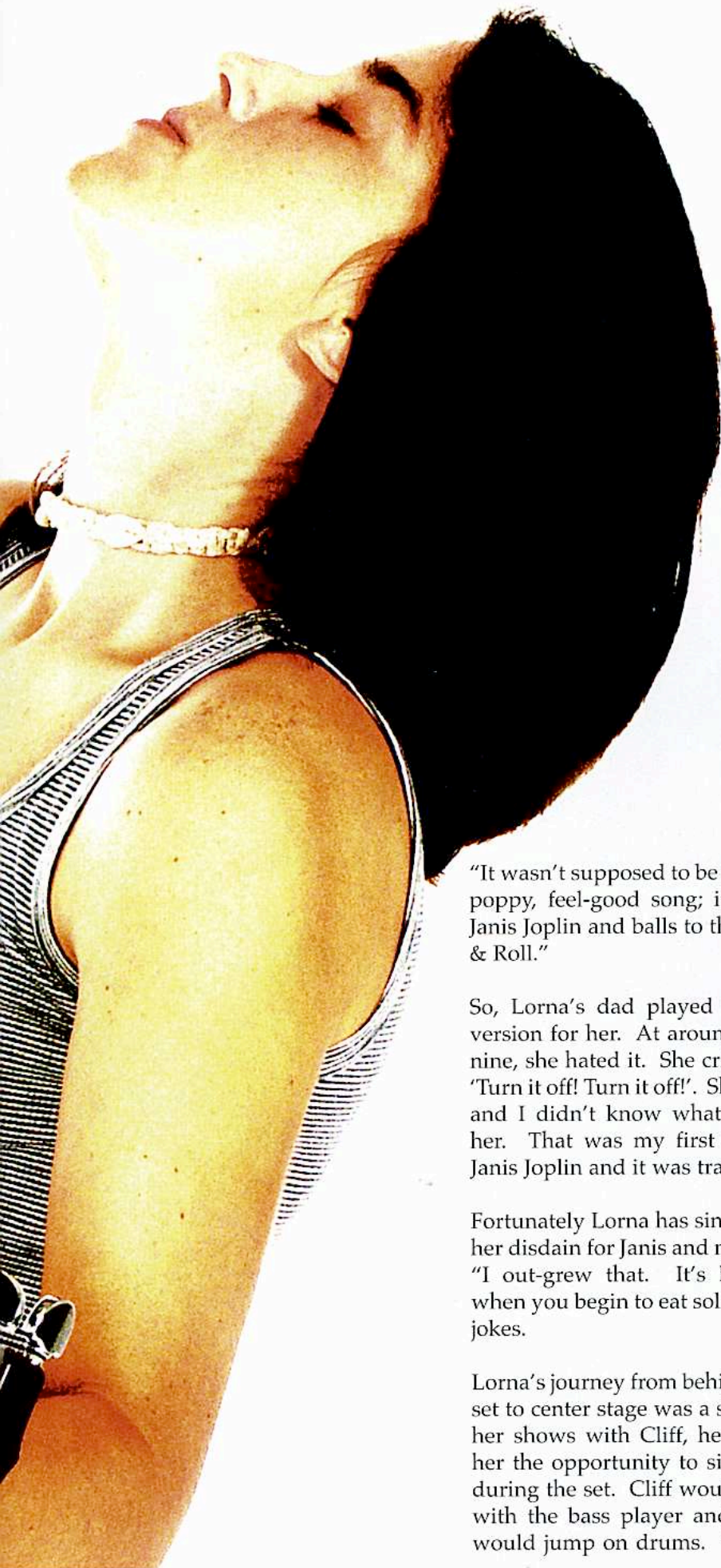
presentation all her own.

Listeners of Lorna will hear Melissa Etheridge in her voice, mixed with a combination of other influences and her own style. Another particular voice you might imagine picking up in Lorna’s is that of the Janis Joplin. This is a humorous coincidence to say the least, as Lorna has an amusing story about her first exposure to Janis.

When she was a kid, Lorna’s musical diet consisted of primarily country music and show tunes. At the time, Faith Hill, popular country music singer, did a cover of the Joplin flagship, “Piece of My Heart.” “I loved it. It was my favorite song, but my dad, of course, loathed it.”

Apparently Lorna’s father knew how the song was supposed to sound.





of a novel thing," she says "we switched instruments for fun and because the crowd liked it."

Gradually as Lorna built her confidence as a vocalist, performer and writer, Cliff encouraged her to move ahead. He suggested she play a mini set on her own and Lorna took to the idea and grew from there.

All of a sudden Lorna was eighteen and preparing to move to college with no way to support herself. Because she couldn't bring the band with her, Lorna's supply of steady gigs would dry up. "I decided to start playing solo, just so I could eat," she says.

Eventually, she was able to build a solid living on playing music and attending school. "There is a living to be made playing out," she says. All through college she played anywhere and everywhere that would hire her, including a steady gig at a cigar bar for four years. "There were seventy year old men drinking their port and smoking their cigars and ...me."

Lorna just graduated from college in May 2005, with a degree in political science. Her intention was not originally to follow this major. She initially planned to major in English, as a route to indulge her love for both reading and original composition. "I thought that was what people who loved those things did. If you loved writing and reading, you became an English major, then you became an English teacher and then you taught more English majors."

All of a sudden during her second week of her freshman year in college, terrorist hijacked planes flew into the Twin Towers in New York. Immediately everything Lorna was studying, all that she was reading and devoting her time to, seemed trivial and insignificant in the scope of things. "I ended up studying politics because it felt like it mattered to me, in the wake of that tragedy."

After this paradigm shift in Lorna's perspective, life as she knew it

"It wasn't supposed to be this country, poppy, feel-good song; it was about Janis Joplin and balls to the wall Rock & Roll."

So, Lorna's dad played the original version for her. At around the age of nine, she hated it. She cried. "I cried 'Turn it off! Turn it off!'. She scared me and I didn't know what to make of her. That was my first exposure to Janis Joplin and it was traumatic."

Fortunately Lorna has since overcome her disdain for Janis and now digs her. "I out-grew that. It's kind of like when you begin to eat solid food," she jokes.

Lorna's journey from behind the drum set to center stage was a slow one. At her shows with Cliff, he would give her the opportunity to sing one song during the set. Cliff would switch off with the bass player and the bassist would jump on drums. "It was kind

undoubtedly changed. As an NPR junkie and an active citizen, Lorna strived to consume a balanced diet of the political happenings in this country and around the world. She has also been swept up by the latest craze in instant media gratification, blogs. Many are completely random bits forwarded to Lorna by her friends and she says it is a fascinating development in how people see the world and the issues. But she is quick to point out however, that as with anything else, moderation is key. "You must have your filter on," she says "You have to think for yourself and digest it for yourself."

The issues in today's society certainly carry great weight with Lorna and the first thing she says when asked about her specific political views is that she has to use the "F" word. "I am a feminist and I'm not afraid to say it." She is passionate about any issues pertaining to sexual justice.

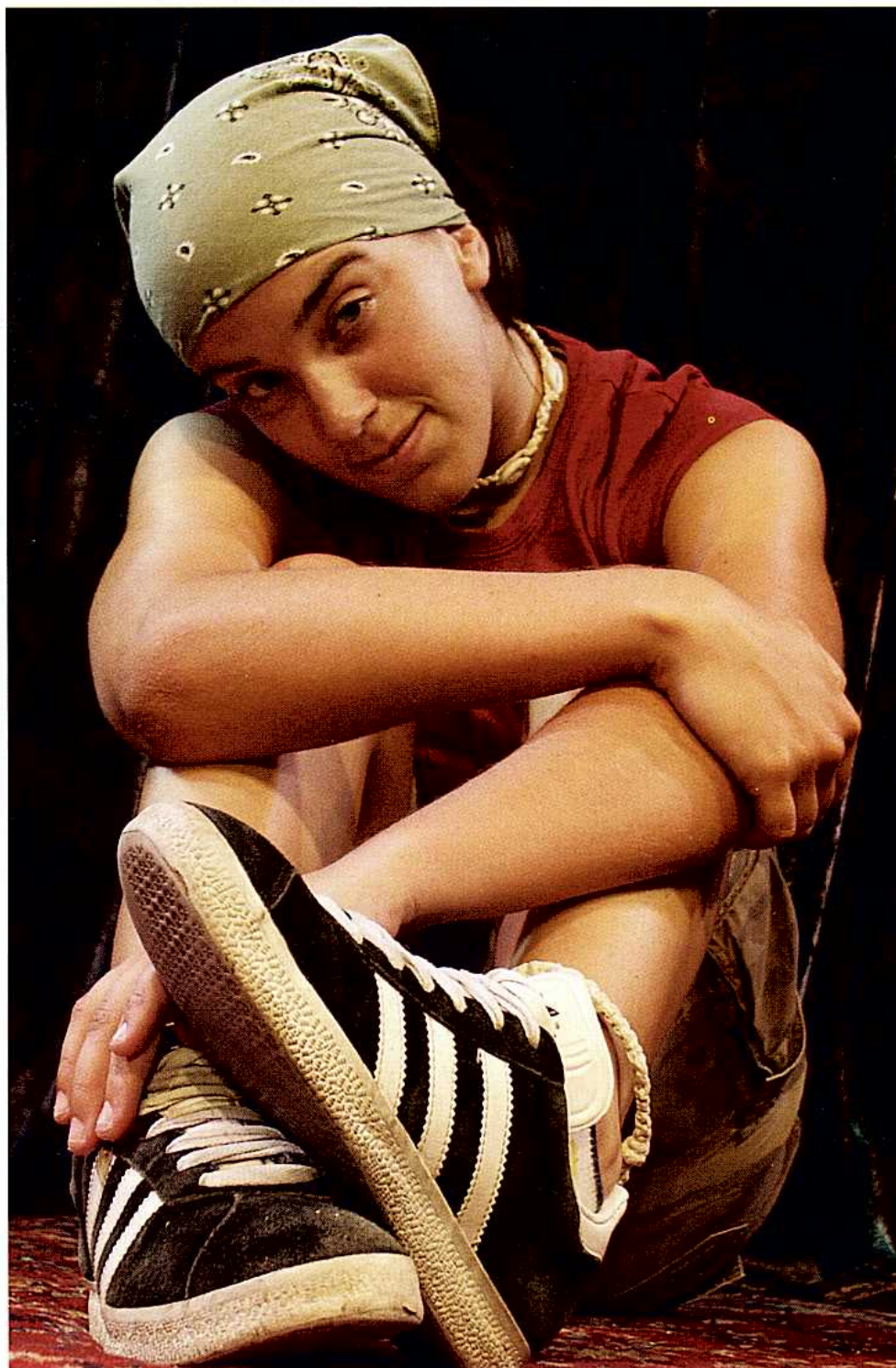
What Lorna sees as the primary political problem in our culture today has very little to do with government and has very little to do with politics in the broad view as most people understand them. "It has everything to do with relations between the sexes." Lorna thinks what people don't realize is that a large portion of these relationships are based on a continuum of power. She thinks this is the source of many of our problems, such as a rape every 3.5 minutes in the United States. Problems such as women and children who are victims of domestic violence, perpetrated by those who supposedly love them. "I think it has to do a lot with the power imbalance between the sexes, which really defines the sexes. My political agenda would be to remove the politics from sex. If we could relate to each other as human beings, completely on equal footing rather than as dominant and submissive parties, the world would be a much more peaceful place.

Lorna's method in catalyzing change is at a grass roots level. "The primary thing I do to inspire change is talk about it." Lorna explains that in her

view the main problem is the lack of attention the matter really gets on both sides. She calls it out when she sees it, singing about it every time she is in front of a microphone. She encourages people to look for these things in their own lives. If a woman realizes something someone in their life is saying or doing to them is actually wrong, they shouldn't take it for granted as the natural way things function. Lorna wants to debunk the notion that this is the way things

should be and strives to make people realize that and stand up against it. "I believe it is an ideal which we can all aspire to. It is a possibility and can become a reality if we all work together. I want to see that hope come to life in the eyes of a woman. That is why I do what I do."

Lorna cares about these issues and does her best to convey those feelings to her audiences. But one thing she adamantly attempts to avoid is



preaching. "I want to persuade, not beat something into someone's head until they submit."

There are many writers who Lorna says she admires, enjoys and respects

who will get up on stage, stomp around and yell and make broad sweeping categorical statements. "People say 'This is how it ought to be!' and I think there is a purpose for that. It encourages people who

already think like you, but I don't think it necessarily wins people over."

Lorna attempts to avoid this battering ram tactic by telling truthful and meaningful stories people can relate to. "I want to let the listener draw their own conclusion after they listen to that story."

She cites one of her songs entitled "Independence Day" as an example. It covers a few controversial issues, such as domestic violence and abortion. Lorna feels if she went on stage and told the audience that a woman's right to choose should be protected, many people would not only be unresponsive to the message, but also uninterested in her music. Rather than be dismissed for being an outright activist on stage, a song like "Independence Day" gives Lorna a vehicle in which to tell a story about a woman who is faced with the decision of whether or not to terminate a pregnancy. "I try to make her a relatable character. I also try to put men and women who may disagree with me into that moment in order to pose the question to them. 'If this were you in this situation and you who had to make the decision, what would you do?' I try to let them see the reality of that real person, rather than this broad political or religious issue."



Lorna's ability to subtly express her views while entertaining audiences of all kinds has led her to a continually more successful career as a musician and her popularity continues to build. With an outlook many students can relate to, Lorna is a perfect fit for college campuses. Even if you don't agree with her opinions, she is respectful enough to allow listeners that comfort, enabling anyone to enjoy the music of Lorna Bracewell.

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