

TALKING TO

Rufus Wainwright

The king of "popera" heads to Berlin for some over-the-top inspiration



Rufus Wainwright may have learned a thing or two from his famous folks, the acclaimed musicians Loudon Wainwright III and Kate McGarrigle, but he's etched out a successful career all on his own. His latest album, *Release the Stars*, shows yet again why he's the master of combining infectious pop hooks with orchestral arrangements. If you've ever wanted to hear The Beach Boys tackle Franz Schubert, Wainwright's your man. **BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI**

CHATELAINE: There are so many different sounds on this record. How do you pull it off?

WAINWRIGHT: It's a Herculean task. You have to constantly work. I imagine it's like being a general in a war.

You produced this album yourself. Why? For artistic reasons. Also, it's wildly cheaper.

You take a hard look at celebrity culture on the song "Release the Stars." It's about celebrity being equated with love. Studios in the past would keep stars in contracts. The song says, essentially, that we must release these celebrities and let them go out and prove themselves to the world. It's a metaphor meaning we must release our love and stop contracting our emotions.

I heard that you intended to create a stripped-down disc, but this is so far from it. What happened? My original plan was to go to Berlin to record and become underground and mysterious. When I got there I started wearing lederhosen, eating a lot of sausages, visiting baroque palaces. It was all incredibly romantic. So I went for the old-fashioned-German, over-the-top vibe rather than the intense, stark, expressionistic thing. Blame it on Berlin.

PLAYLIST of the month

IF YOU LIKE Chantal Kreviazuk



CHECK OUT

Mandy Moore's *Wild Hope*
(EMI/Firm)

Maturity. It's a frightening word for some pop starlets, but not Mandy Moore. On the singer-turned-movie star's sixth album, Moore quits trying to be like Britney Spears, opting instead to grow into a legit performer. Surprisingly, there isn't a manufactured sound among the soothing guitar strums and laid-back folk melodies. Confident, focused and real, Moore's latest release is one your teenage daughter will beg to borrow.

IF YOU LIKE Norah Jones



CHECK OUT

Keren Ann's self-titled disc
(Blue Note)

Norah Jones may be the female singer-songwriter of choice these days, but the guitar-slinging songstress Keren Ann is the one to watch. The Israeli-born, Paris-raised artist's delicate vocals, hushed instrumentation and dark yet inspiring lyrics set her apart from her more conventional peers. So dim the lights, break out the red wine and let Ann's fragile melodies take care of the rest.

IF YOU LIKE Sarah Harmer



CHECK OUT

Feist's *The Reminder* (Arts & Crafts)

The highly anticipated new album from musical savant Leslie Feist—her first in three years—is an intimate, soul-laced, indie-rock opus. With minimalist jazz numbers, airy acoustics and a dulcet voice that plenty of big-name artists would kill for, it's best to catch Feist now before the rest of the world comes calling. The Calgary-born artist begins her North American tour May 15 in Victoria, B.C. B.B.

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