

**Joan Osborne
w/ G. Love, Special Sauce
The Wiltern
June 1**

by Rebecca Kraus

"I'm going to see Alanis Morissette next," said Big Show Joe, as the crowd dispersed outside the Wiltern. "I'll compare the two. This one was nominated but Alanis won all those awards," he boasted with a smirk. Joe, as I dubbed him, was showing off his knowledge of Grammys '96, where Morissette swept past most others, including "this one" Joan Osborne — our evening's entertainment. Joe, I suspect, was not alone this night in his quest for mainstream meaning.

Indeed, most of Osborne's audience has gone to the middle of musical expectations and appreciation. They got up and cheered loudest with "One Of Us," the most familiar, most mundane and least danceable song off her *Relish* album. They consisted of daddies, young girls in love, hepcats and aunts. The crowd wastefully capucinnoed during the rousing "Spider Web," gawked during "St. Theresa," and made out during the melancholy "Crazy Baby." From the look of things, Joan Osborne has gotten *really* big, and with that, her audience

has been diluted. I longed for the LunaPark gig of last year — before the radio play and hype. But alas, you just can't keep the good ones down. And Osborne is — despite the over exposure — good. *Really good.*

She began with a quawwali rendition of "Pensacola," a manifestation of her recent trip to India. She fluttered her voice around the opening notes, taunting and haunting in the best Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan fashion. Accompanying Osborne on stage were large portraits of Hindu deities, an angel carrying a guitar, and a light show befitting a star. With Eastern influences, a Southern blues sensibility, and songs about emotions, saints and Gods, Osborne created a setting where she had to reconcile religion with sexuality. She cried, teased, groaned and floated, cultivating an often raw, scorching presence.

In concert, Osborne abandons the polish of *Relish* and infuses forthright sex, grits, and spirit into her set, performing the songs the way they were intended. Then, more sex, on songs like "Right Hand Man" and "Ladder." She dances with her band in fits

of fun, flirtation, and hair-whipping frenzies. She even broke from tradition and played "Let's Get Naked," a metaphorical title for emotions. And while you can't deny the range of her talent, Osborne's popularity seems misdirected, maybe even a bit wasted. Her appeal lies not in her radio hits and Grammy nominations, but in her ability to perform with unbridled passion and soul. It's Osborne's gutsy feminine swagger, not polite singing about "phoning the pope in Rome" which defines her best. And perhaps the bloated Wiltern crowd, as told by Big Show Joe, proved how bittersweet mainstream mania can be.

G. Love and Special Sauce began

made the place almost cozy for the hometown rant from the band, who wasted no time spinning their kaleidoscope.

With that authoritative hearty voice, frontwoman extraordinaire Bozulich strips away any slickness and just wails, never once muddling the clarity of her lyrics. But despite her fierce and feisty presence, she's not the only Fibber with some funk. The stand-up bassist whips around like Pete Townshend; the fiddler vibrates with a twang; the guitarists riotously churn up a storm; and the drummer brutally beats. And this on the ballads, like "Lilybelle" and the bitter-sweet "Marmalade." Well no song is

just soft or hard, fairy-tale or punk; they are more like mini-symphonies, emotional layers building on one another. Just like Bozulich never forces herself into a chorus, always letting her ire surface naturally, so too are the Fibbers' songs natural transitions unto themselves. Epiphanies and confused maelstroms. Mythical country folklore and orchestral masterpieces. Without seeming manufactured, the Fibbers are brilliantly artful with Bozulich as their foremost performer.



Walkin' After Midnight with the Geraldine Fibbers

the night with an appropriate masculine romp. The New Orleans slurring sound rolled off G. Love's bouncing knees into the audience with a harmonica and bass line. A blend of funk, rap and jazz, the boys played a lazy opening set prepping the crowd for Osborne.

**The Geraldine Fibbers
The El Rey Theater
June 7, 1996
by Rebecca Kraus**

I can't decide which is worse — old guys listlessly watching Joan Osborne swirl, or record company "VIP's" napping during a rousing set by L.A.'s own Geraldine Fibbers? Napping?! What is wrong with these people?! The Fibbers create many different states in people: emotional unrest, rage, country comfort, and rapture. But sleepiness? Luckily, the awake outnumbered the snoozing at the Fibbers' end of the road show at the El Rey Theater, and those devout enthusiastically greeted their country-punk-space-age heroes, Carla Bozulich and company. Hot pink chandeliers and streams of colored Trekkie beams

performance artist.

Of course, she had a little help from Mr. Hollywood, the emcee for the evening. In tight white dittos and a Hawaiian shirt, this poster boy for the sexually liberated vogue and shimmied just off to the side of the stage, like an interpreter for the emotionally impaired. He was also comic relief, and the translator for what was left unsaid, which, according to the Fibbers, was virtually nothing by the time "Dusted" unraveled the encore.

So who walks in after midnight but Joan Osborne herself, fresh off her own finale gig down Wilshire Boulevard. With the Fibbers' music decidedly anti-mainstream, and radio-unlikely, wonder what Osborne thought walking into this little theater of eclectic authenticity. The Fibbers, in this compact venue, were right where they should be: big in a small way. Giving up their best Sonic Youth feedback alongside some Patsy Cline crooning, alongside some X insight, the Geraldine Fibbers' music remains a true anomaly, hit-single shy, and all the more satisfying because of it. **51**