

nicole campbell

biography

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Did you ever stop to wonder about the in-between moments? The moments that disappear so quickly after they have occurred that their memories are left a bit shadowy. Like the mere instant before you kiss someone for the first time. The gleam in their eye, the tilt of their head, the simple chemistry brewing in a way that makes you hope they kiss as good as they look. That's when you should take a long deep breath and calculate history as it's about to shift. Nicole Campbell knows this moment.

Out of the murky depths of this human existence, a powerful voice rises, captivating in its sincerity, and steeped in emotion. From the opening strains of one of her songs, it is evident that Nicole Campbell is unafraid to wear her heart on her sleeve. Transcending the one-dimensional singer/songwriter label, Campbell weaves rich melodic tapestries with candid lyricism, spellbinding in their intimacy and stark honesty. Her intricate narratives of love and desire intuitively express the innermost delicacies of interpersonal interaction. Draped in the warmth of ease and familiarity, the listener feels soothed by the musical caress of someone who truly understands.

Nicole Campbell was born to sing. For me, music was more a calling than a choice, she says with conviction and her casual charm. At age three, my grandfather taped me singing a skewed version of a Christmas carol my father had taught me (ahem... Randolph the Bald Head Cowboy), in tune with most, if not all, of the words intact, and she's never looked back. Campbell began studying piano at age seven only to be drawn to playing by ear. Later she focused on honing and training her developing voice as a teen because I knew I wanted to be one of those people you heard when you turned on the radio. Accolades and awards rolled in, allowing Campbell to earn a music degree in vocal performance from Willamette University - but all the while she knew she was preparing for a life in popular music.

Turning from the rigidity of opera and classical voice toward the freedom of rock-n-roll, Campbell formed her first official band in Portland a decade ago. Though she released a single on Puddlestomp in 1992, the real turn came when Ivan's Wish was formed two years later. The power-quartet made a swift side entrance into the Portland scene by releasing a fierce, but friendly, beautiful monster of a debut, fiR, before ever playing out live. Then they backed up their promise with Campbell melting mics throughout the Northwest. Ivan's Wish burned bright and fast; eight months later, at the top of their game, Campbell watched the band dissolve before her eyes.

Her reaction? Campbell returned to performing as "Nicole Campbell" again. She has a new backing band now - which includes Ned Failing on drums (On a Llama, Lea Krueger, The Strangers), Leah Hinchcliff on bass, and Laurie Miller on guitar (both of Swamp Mama Johnson). The new band line up is full blown rock and the synergy expressed during their performances is unmistakable.

Nicole's first full-length, solo CD Little Voice is a debut solo album that offers 11 of her well crafted, evocative songs and is more than just girl with guitar. Campbell's sculpted sound includes electric and acoustic guitars, mandolin, violin, cello, upright and fretless bass; everything from sultry serenades to full blown rock. This lush collection of textures and feelings will reach inside and leave the listener deeply touched. Lulling and lush, her vocals are the vital element in the sonic tableaux that producer Tony Lash has helped her to create on her latest effort, Songs from the Red Room. Departing from her down-home singer/songwriter roots and classical vocal leanings, this CD finds Campbell's songs at their most mercurial. Layered acoustic and electric guitar, organ and Wurliitzer, thick cello, revolving drum loops, undulating bass and a voice that can't help but tell you the truth that you were too distracted to notice.

Recorded over the course of 4 months with producer/musician Tony Lash (Heatmiser, Dandy Warhols, Eric Matthews) and engineer Jeff Saltzman (Sunset Valley, King Black Acid), Campbell channeled her influences wisely to create a dulcet blend of emotionally unsparing rock and introspective musical explorations. Spending the better part of 2000 holed up in her bedroom (the actual Red Room) she crafted over 20 songs, the finest of which evolved into Songs From The Red Room.

Campbell enlisted a diverse array of Portland luminaries to lend their musical talents to this effort. The opening track "Road To You" features the guitar, bass and Wurliitzer expertise of Luther Russell. Additional bass guitar brilliance was lent by Eric Furlong (Sunset Valley), Brian Cutler, and Phil Baker (Diana Ross, Michael Jackson, Marvin Gaye, Linda Ronstadt), additional drum talents offered by Ned Failing (The Strangers, On a Llama), and cello magic by Lori Presthus. The deepest pool of commissioned genius on Songs From The Red Room, however, belongs to producer/multi-instrumentalist Tony Lash. Besides offering his patented brand of rich sonic visioning, Lash also contributed resonant layers of drums, off-center guitar, mysterious noises and a bevy of vintage keyboards to the mix.

In support of her musical endeavors, Nicole Campbell tours the nation's rock clubs and house concerts giving the usual cynics far more than they deserve and the true believers just what they need. Her disturbingly charming stage presence has caused her to become well known in certain circles for tempering her glowing rock with raucous wit and superb musicianship. In fact, 4 out of 5 audience members agree that they have left Campbell's live performances feeling considerably better than when they arrived!