
Ann Vriend



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FULL INFO

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AV has been hailed by NOW Magazine as a musician who "turns soul on its head, belting out delicate introspection in the form of fire". She is one of the only independent artists in recent history to break into the Top 100 Pop Charts of commercial radio in Germany, the world's 4th largest music market; even taking the #1 spot on one of their largest stations, Bayern 1. To quote the Toronto Star: "Don't miss her."

Aside from the commercial sphere, AV's music consistently receives spins on community and campus radio across Canada, where currently her new album sits at #2 on the esteemed listener-supported CKUA; and she has been the guest on such nationally favourite radio shows such as "Vinyl Cafe", and Holger Petersen's "Saturday Night Blues," and "All Nat'l Blues." In Germany AV has performed on popular TV shows such as ZDF's "Morgenmagazin" and "The Pierre M Krause Show, as well as Arte TV; and in Australia she was a guest on ABC's comedy show, "Spicks and Specks," "The Inner Sleeve", and others. AV has recorded at Sony Studios and the Hit Factory in NYC, and worked with esteemed producers such as Ray Bardani and Joe Chicarelli; and by his request she has worked with multiple number one hit songwriter Dan Hill.

AV's last tour before the pandemic was a six-night opening slot for UK star Lisa Stansfield, where each night Stansfield's crowds were captivated into complete silence before the end of AV's first song.

Based on this success a 21-date spring 2020 tour of Europe was booked, with many shows sold out by early February, 2020. A brand new album was to be released in conjunction with the tour, and 2020 looked to be an incredibly promising year for AV-- had it not been for, of course, the pandemic.

So, instead, AV launched what came to be a weekly event called "Porch Concerts"; where for nearly 60 Sundays of the pandemic she and other musical guests performed free concerts on her front porch, with people coming from all over her hometown of Edmonton to take it in. The porch concerts also saw participation both musically and logistically by the often-ignored members of her difficult and notorious inner-city neighbourhood of McCauley, which has suffered increasingly during the opioid crisis, and the COVID19 pandemic.

In fact, the subject matter of AV's new album, "Everybody Matters," is informed and influenced by the McCauley neighbourhood, in in which there is a high concentration of people suffering from extreme forms of trauma and abuse; often resulting in addiction, mental illness, stigmatization, neglect, and further abuse. AV's own self-examination in response to this is the subject matter of the full-length album, in which she delves into the historical, cultural, and colonial reasons behind a great deal of this suffering, and which has led AV down a path of self-discovery, as much as it was a discovery of her neighbours and their own biographical stories.

And so, due to the pandemic, rather than touring the album first internationally AV instead presented the new album to the very neighborhood which had inspired it.

And while "Everybody Matters" is quite directly a work of social examination AV has always written songs about confusion, searching, and questioning -- of herself, and the

culture around her. The outcome is what she half-seriously, half-jokingly calls "existentialist gospel"; drawing from classic soul artists who have delivered stunning recordings which are both contagiously fun AND socially thought provoking; such as Curtis Mayfield, Bill Withers, Sly Stone, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Nina Simone, Ray Charles, and, especially, Aretha Franklin-- all the way up the line to Sharon Jones, Tracy Chapman, Cee Lo Green, John Legend, and Alicia Keys; while lyrically AV drew from her parents' vinyl '70s folk/pop collection which included artists such as Cat Stevens, Leonard Cohen, and Paul Simon. The one thing all these all had in common is there were artists who often questioned the society of their times.

"Everybody Matters" was produced by AV herself, with the album's vocals and keys co-produced with esteemed Canadian/British producer Chris Birkett (Buffy Sainte Marie, Sinead O'Connor); and it features virtuosic Hammond organ playing by former Edmontonian Doug Organ alongside AV's vocals and keyboard playing; while percussion and drums were played by Edmonton's Fred Brenton (Kimberlite Records); and drum programming was done by Edmonton's Brandon Unis (Velveteen Studios). The response from those who have already bought the album has been nothing short of stunning, with many saying it is by far AV's best album to date.