

leni stern



finally the rain has come

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leni stern is

Leni Stern is perpetual motion. When she's not wearing one of her many professional hats (singer, guitarist, label owner, author, composer, orchestrator), she is wearing one or more of the other many hats that make her who she is: social advocate, martial artist (she holds three belts in the Southern Shaolin discipline of Hung-Ga), cancer survivor, proud New York City resident... the list goes on and on. When asked if she considers herself a role model given her achievements, she demurs: "I have been told I'm a role model, but I find that hard to believe most of the time. I hope I can be an inspiration, though. I want people to realize that if they want to do something or dream of being something, that they should follow their dreams."

An unassuming and humble role model she certainly is, given her stellar 17-year, 12-album recording career. Gibson has chosen her as the Female Guitarist of the Year five consecutive times. She originally made a name for herself in jazz circles (her first nine albums were instrumental), then crossed her talents over into more of a singer-songwriter realm, garnering a great deal of press praise in the process. Her music, which has been dubbed "folk-jazz," incorporates "intelligent lyrics and beautifully drawn vignettes" (Washington Post), "crystalline, jazz-meets-blues guitar lines" (Guitar Player), and "thoughtful structure, evocative moods, attention to groove" (San Francisco Bay Guardian).

- guitarist, vocalist, composer, orchestrator.
- a businesswoman, artist, cancer survivor, social advocate, martial artist, author.
- in the 17th year of her recording career.
- honored to have been chosen the Gibson Female Guitarist of the Year five times.
- ready to release her 13th album, "Finally The Rain Has Come," in June 2002.
- thrilled to have many noteworthy musicians contributing to her new album, including: Bill Frisell, John McLaughlin, Zakir Hussain, Keith Carlock (Steely Dan), Paul Socolow (David Byrne Band), Jenny Scheinman and Michael Brecker.

a little background

Born in Munich, Germany, Leni started playing piano at the age of six and guitar at eleven. At seventeen, she formed her own acting company. Her radical productions sold out houses across Europe and attracted press and TV coverage. In 1977, she turned her attention to music and left for the United States to study film scoring at the Berklee College of Music in Boston. Film scoring gave way to her love for guitar and in 1981, Leni moved to New York City to play in a variety of rock and jazz bands. In 1983, she formed a group of her own with Paul Motion on drums and Bill Frisell on guitar. Leni's 1985 "Clairvoyant" was her first solo instrumental recording. Eight albums and 12 years later, in 1997, she released "Black Guitar," her first vocal full-length release.

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calling the shots

In between writing, recording, and touring, Leni somehow finds the time to run her own record label, Leni Stern Recordings (LSR), which she began in 1997 with the release of "Black Guitar." While she hopes to release albums by other performers in the jazz and songwriter worlds in the future, Leni has already released two additional albums of her own on LSR thus far: 1998's "Recollection," a critically-acclaimed retrospective which made the top 10 of the year for Billboard in the jazz category and also included five new vocal tracks; and "Kindness of Strangers," Leni's 2000 release which saw her breaking new ground: that of orchestrator/composer, especially on the centerpiece track, "Vedo Il Tuo Viso (I See Your Face)." "I got the commission," Leni remembers. "Then, because of the availability of musicians and circumstances surrounding the event, I found out I was going to have to compose a song for a full orchestra of 120 performers!" She rose to the occasion, to stunning results, prompting the Washington Post to declare: "...her multi-faceted talent is shining in ways it never has before."

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2002 will mark the release of Leni's 13th album, the shimmering, luminous, wonderfully-expressive, "Finally The Rain Has Come," which was co-produced by Leni herself and George Whitty (with whom she also co-produced her last album, "Kindness of Strangers"). She gathered many of her friends for the album, which resulted in an impressive "who's who" sort of team. The album features Americana textures compliments of Bill Frisell's guitars and Jenny Scheinman's violin; world music sounds from John McLaughlin and Zakir Hussain; elements of rock from Keith Carlock (Steely Dan) and Paul Socolow (David Byrne Band); and the jazz stylings of Michael Brecker's saxophone.

Recorded in Leni's adopted hometown of New York City in October of 2001, the album includes some songs that are in reaction to the events that took place in September of that year. "The events of September 11th changed us all," Leni says, "and I searched to find something to say. I believe it is our duty as artists to find words, songs and images to help us live through the darkness. 'Where Is God' and 'For Peace To Come' were both written after that day."

On her last album, Leni included a song, "Vedo Il Tuo Viso (I See Your Face)," that she'd been commissioned to write for the Agosto 2 festival held annually in Bologna, Italy. The festival is held in remembrance of a neo-fascist attack which left 85 people dead. "For that song, I'd studied and read about the effects of terrorism on Italy," Leni recalls. "It made it that much more horrible when a terrorist act happened last year in my own city." "Finally The Rain Has Come," then, is an aural balm, meant to soothe, to remember, to celebrate healing, and to, most importantly, celebrate life.

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leni stern – the press has spoken

- "(the) balance of music and lyrics... impressively illustrates how she continues to hone and deepen an already-impressive body of work." - National Public Radio "All Things Considered"
- "Stern has developed into one of the most interesting fuses of pop songwriting and jazz instincts since Joni Mitchell..." - Boston Phoenix
- "...evocative songs and crystalline jazz-meets-blues guitar lines..." - Guitar Player
- "...Stern creates a series of evocative soundscapes that complement her fragile but soulful voice and subtly integrate her guitar skills. ...the combination of Stern's wistful voice, smart lyrics and orchestral designs are distinctive enough to make comparisons pointless. ...her multi-faceted talent is shining in ways it never has before." - Washington Post
- "Stern abandons any hope of fitting her music into preconceived categories, with spectacular results." - Billboard
- "...a hybrid of pop, poetry and jazz guitar..." - Los Angeles Times
- "With so much talent, Stern makes everything sound effortless and exquisite." - Performing Songwriter
- "Music fans who favor Petty over Parker regularly swoon to the tunes that the fortysomething guitarist...sings in a focused, intimate voice. ...So jazz, schmazz - some of Stern's pieces are vocal, some are instrumental, and all fall into one category: fetching." - The Village Voice
- "Although some unfortunate audiences still don't know it, Leni Stern has... distinguished herself as one of the preeminent composers on the modern scene... matched only by her sublime guitar skills." - Jazz Times