

**Sorcerers, Scamps, Sufis and Satan Inspire Leni Stern's
'When Evening Falls', Set for May 11th Release**

**Kenya, India, Nagaland and 'Ice Cold Water' in New Orleans Serve
as Backdrop for 10-Song CD by the Acclaimed
Guitarist/Singer/Songwriter**

**The Samburo People, a Masai Tribe, are Catalysts for
Album's Centerpiece, the Cautionary Tale 'Oje Mama'**

With the May 11th release of 'When Evening Falls', award-winning guitarist Leni Stern draws upon her travels to Kenya, India and New Orleans to deliver her most cohesive singer-songwriter album to date. Using loops of audio samples recorded amid such diverse locales as West Africa and Bourbon Street, Stern weaves a fascinating, textured 10-song set.

Conjuring headhunters and rascals alike, her tales come to life. From the haunting cautionary tale "Oje Mama Oje" to the hypnotic pulse of "House On A Hill", Stern's vocals call to mind a range of contemporaries, from Macy Gray to Joni Mitchell to Shawn Colvin. With the delicate "Let Me Fly" and the India-inspired "Abke Hum Bichede", she reveals a new confidence and passion in her songwriting. Stern's soulful cover of the standard "I'll Be Seeing You" brings to mind Sting's "Fragile" mixed with a bit of Edith Piaf.

An unexpected delight is the irreverent "Ice Cold Water \$1", as joyful as a child's tune, with a chorus that gets in your head and stays stuck. With her distinctive guitar solos, winning melodies and conversational lyrics, Leni Stern has taken an afternoon in New Orleans and turned it into a treat for the ages.

Leni Stern documents her travels, filming and recording what she sees and hears. Sometimes casually, sometimes with careful planning, she compiles a travel log, and later builds songs around the experiences. Stern is "fascinated by how alike we are. Despite taking different shapes and singing different songs, we are all the same inside. We all see pain and injustice, we all have hopes, we all tell stories and share our histories with our children. Ultimately, there's an authenticity in these stories that transcends geography." It's a pursuit of that authenticity in her own writing which serves to drive and inspire Stern.

Background on Leni Stern:

Leni Stern is a singer, guitarist, label owner, author, composer, orchestrator, social advocate, martial artist (she holds three belts in the Southern Shaolin discipline of Hung-Ga), cancer survivor and proud New York City resident. The list goes on and on.

During her stellar 19-year, 13-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 the singer-songwriter realm, garnering consistent praise in the process. Her music 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**).

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. In between writing, recording, and touring, Leni runs her own record label, Leni Stern Recordings (LSR).

Select Song Notes Written by Leni Stern:

‘Oje Mama Oje’:

“I traveled in Kenya a few years ago. The Samburo people, a Masai tribe, took me and my friends on a week-long walk along a dried riverbed. I recorded the songs they were singing while we walked, and I recorded the tribe dancing and singing when we stopped to rest. From what I could make out, these songs were stories, and the storyteller would start by chanting “oje mama oje”. You can hear the chants on the loops and samples throughout the song. I heard this particular story in West Africa. The man in the tale is always poor...so poor that he decides to go and find a sorcerer who supposedly lives far inside the jungle. This sorcerer can make you a rich man, if you can find him, if you can give him a live chicken or a sheep, if he is in a good mood, that is, and decides you deserve wealth. Our man buys a chicken with his last pennies and gets on his way. When he finds the sorcerer’s hut, he pleads his case: He is in love with a beautiful girl but can’t marry her, because he is poor. The sorcerer takes pity on him and decides to help him. The sorcerer tells the man to build a fire, then goes back into his hut. The sorcerer comes back with a can of gasoline, pours it over the wood and sets it on fire. When the flames are nice and hot he takes the man’s chicken and throws it in. The chicken burns up. Our man is beside himself. “What did you do that for?!” the man cries. “We could have eaten it or waited for it to lay eggs. Now it’s ruined!” “Well,” says the sorcerer, “I’m going to make some money for you now, a lot of it, and while I do, I want you to think about this, because when I give you the money you will end up just like that chicken in the fire. The money is not the answer to your prayers.”

‘Ice-Cold Water \$1’

I went to New Orleans last year, to see the Jazzfest. My friends had rented a house right behind the gospel tent. We could hear the choirs sing all day long. The city was full of street musicians and vendors with jujubeads and carnival masks and delicious New Orleans food. It was the end of April and already really hot. Four kids, none older than 10, were tap-dancing on our corner. They had cut up beer cans on their sneakers. The grooves they were playing would have amazed most drummers I know. I took out my tape recorder and stood next to them for a while. My little friend Shashi from New Orleans kept me company. When I dropped some money in the hat the kids had put out, he noticed that the smallest of the four boys didn’t get any of it. Shashi kept on me until I walked right over to the little guy and put a \$5 bill in his hand. I should have known better. The oldest of the kids tried to grab the money from the little one, and a fight broke out. I gave everyone a \$5 bill, but they took it away from the little one again, I gave him some money again. They just carried on fighting. I felt like a stupid tourist. Finally, they started dancing again and they put on a great, flashy performance for us. Shashi was proud as a peacock for having taken care of things on his street, and we went to eat some

beignets until we were both covered in white powdered sugar. When I started to write a song to the groove I had recorded, I noticed this little voice in the background... "ice-cold water \$1, ice cold water \$1", over and over again. That's when I remembered her: A fat little girl sitting on a cart with a bucket full of ice. I wished I had gone over to talk to her, I wished I had bought some of her water. You can hear her voice in the song.

'House On A Hill'

My friend Senti was born in Nagaland. She belongs to the AO Tribe. Her great grandfather was jailed by the British for headhunting. Nagas have always cut off the heads of their enemies. They displayed the skulls in their villages as signs of courage. The Nagas are warrior tribes that live in the hills of northeast India, between Assam and the border of Burma. They are a very musical people. Every Naga is a singer. Senti Toy, her sister Yala and her little daughter Nhumi are my backup singers on this song. Their old music, work songs, festival chants and poetic ballads are almost extinct. The missionaries that came to Nagaland in the beginning of the last century felt threatened by the music and tried to replace it with prayers and hymns. I was invited to visit Senti's family last year. It is almost impossible for foreigners to enter Nagaland. My permit had at least 10 different signatures and stamps on it. Everywhere I went, little kids came running and stared and whispered. They had never seen anyone that looked like me. We stayed in the house where Senti's parents live, high up on a hill. The first night there, I sat outside and looked over the valley. And I wrote the words to this song. In the choruses we chant like Naga women do when they work.

'I'll Be Seeing You'

I have played in a little club in the village for many years, a real wateringhole. They used to have a policy that you could bring a painting to pay for your liquor bill, if you had no money. The walls were covered with the strangest art. Some really awful, some beautiful. Right next to the stage was a portrait of Billie Holiday, in black and white. The artist who had painted it loved to come and talk to the band. She had known Billie, and called her Lady Day. She had many stories, some true, some not. And she probably got me thinking of singing a song that Billie used to sing.

When I played "I'll Be Seeing You" for the first time, I noticed out of the corner of my eye that Cecil Taylor, one of the greatest living jazz pianists and a friend of Billie Holiday's, had come in. I instantly regretted having chosen this song, but it was too late, I had to try and do my best. During the break, Cecil came over to me and said he never liked it when any singer sang one of Billie's songs. And then he said "but I like to listen to you sing 'I'll Be Seeing You'". I guess I'm a guitar player in his eyes. Cecil comes often now to hear us play. When I saw him come in a while ago, I called "I'll Be Seeing You". He smiled. At the break I said "that was for you Cecil".

"Isn't it always?" he said. It is.

'Abke Hum Bichede'

I played the Mumbai Jazz Festival five years ago, and ever since then I've spent some of the winter weeks in India. I heard Indian music early on. My father sponsored Indian classical concerts in Munich, Germany, where I was born, and I have vivid memories of Imrath Khan, Pateka Joes and many others playing in our house. My two younger brothers were studying sitar. My brother Bernie played keyboards, and got a harmonium to practice with. I remember my mother trying to understand Indian vocal rhythms. Imrath's tabla player, who was very young (the age of my brothers at the time,) was always singing bols for her. I remember how she was a little concerned that we were all sitting on the living room floor, that our guests were wearing pajama outfits and that all the men were holding hands, like they do in India, but definitely not in Munich.

Dhanashree Pandit Rai is my vocal teacher, my music teacher. I sit on the carpet in her house in Mumbai every year, and she sings a phrase and I try to play it and sing it back to her. Sometimes she'll tell me a story about a raga, or a famous old musician. And we

have tea. I was first interested in that sound that came off the Beatles' records. I got fascinated with the old improvisational tradition in Indian music. My guitar teacher, Bill Frisell, had me transcribe a Villayat Khan sitar solo. I listened to John Coltrane on his record "India", I listened to Charlie Mariano play with a South Indian ensemble, John McLaughlin's group Shakti was and still is my favorite band. I fell in love with Nusrath Fath Ali Khan. I think that musicians have always looked to India for inspiration. Abke Hum Bichede is an old gazal. A Sufi love song. "After you go, I'll only see you in my dreams. I'll find you like flower petals hidden between the pages of my book". In our concerts in India we play it just before we play the standard "I'll Be Seeing You." We have a song like that," said Dhanashree, when she first heard the Billie Holiday song. "It tells the same stories with the same notes."

For more information about Leni Stern or for a review copy of "When Evening Falls", please contact SethCohenPR@earthlink.net or 212-873-1011.

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