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Diversions



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Jason Mraz is still
a work in progress
— 2C



Listening to the way Songs tell the STORY for folksinger Barbara Barrett

By Ken Marten
Special to the Daily Tribune

Barbara Barrett likes to tell stories, and she tells them best with help from her Guild acoustic guitar.

Singer-songwriter Barrett, 36, is making her way in Detroit's music scene with melodic tunes that set the mood and celebrate the simple side of life, as evidenced in the 10 tracks on her sophomore CD, "Listen to the Way," released last summer.

"When people ask what kind of music I play, I say folkie pop, but I like singer-songwriter as a genre," said Barrett, who lives in Oak Park. "It kind of does allude to folk anyway. Folk is storytelling."

Barrett's efforts haven't just gained the attention of audiences in metro Detroit coffeehouses. The Motor City Music Foundation, which presents the annual Detroit Music Awards, has included Barrett's video for the song "She is Not Alone" as one of the 26 nominated for the category of outstanding music video/limited budget. The winner will be announced at the awards ceremony on Thursday at Detroit's State Theatre.

Barrett's husband and filmmaker Steve Oatley made the video from hundreds of photos he shot during her four-hour sidewalk performance at last year's Ferndale Fine Art Show & Food Festival.

"It's nice having a husband involved in the arts," said Barrett with a knowing smile.

Barrett grew up in Birmingham and graduated from Seaholm High School. She went west and earned a business degree from the University of Colorado in Boulder, where she first picked up the guitar. Prior to



WHAT: Motor City Music Foundation annual awards ceremony with live performances by The Hard Lessons, SSM, Natives of the New Dawn, Denise James, Hot Club of Detroit, plus an all-star tribute to the music of J Dilla and Proof, and the "Boogie Woogie Piano Throwdown" featuring Joe Weaver.

WHEN: Thursday, doors open at 6 p.m., ceremony starts at 7 p.m.

WHERE: State Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit.

TICKETS: \$20-\$100.

INFORMATION: 248-486-3424. www.detroitmusicawards.com.

learning the instrument — the first song she mastered was "Closer to Fine" by the Indigo Girls — Barrett sang with an a cappella group until she was told that her voice wasn't strong enough.

Barrett maintains a self-deprecating air about the experience.

"I always loved to sing — on the swing set when I was a kid, I'd made up songs — but I probably had more passion than talent at the time," she said. "I probably still do."

Barrett snagged her first paying gig in 1993 at a bar in Big Sky, Mont., where she moved after graduating. Gigs at area bars, coffeehouses and dude ranches soon dominated her weekends.

She moved back to Michigan in 1996 and released her debut CD, "Two," in 1999. Oatley shot a video for the title track.

Barrett keeps a steady performance schedule and has served as

the opening act for nationally known folk duos like Vint and Mathilda and Annie and Rod Capps. She performs at The Coffee Beanery in Berkley Saturday evening.

In between gigs, Barrett hones her songwriting skills, searching to tell the next story. She's a four-time veteran of Lamb's Retreat for Songwriters, an annual symposium held up north in Harbor Springs and presented by singer-songwriter John D. Lamb of Royal Oak.

"She's been a wonderful attendee — always serious and motivated," Lamb said. "She's written some great songs. Recently, I've noticed more intensity in Barbara's lyrics. She draws emotion from the listener. I love her sincerity."

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Steve Oatley
Singer-songwriter
Barbara Barrett of
Oak Park received her first
Detroit Music
Awards nomination this year. Her
video for the song
"She is Not
Alone" is nominated in the category of outstanding music video/limited budget.

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

renfields poised for release of new album

ward Walker
Daily Tribune

were all fans of alt-country legends the Jayhawks, a bird motif was suggested.