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MOVIE GUIDE

The sun is finally shining on Lynn Miles

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Freelance



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Life is feeling sunnier for Ottawa singer-songwriter Lynn Miles.

"Things are changing," she admits. "I was going through all these notebooks and thought, 'Holy cow, what a dark little life you've led.'

"I've changed, both with age and from quitting drinking a couple of years ago. I'm not writing songs about fairies and dreamcatchers, but I am looking at the world a little differently and it's coming out in my songs. I think I'm becoming less self-involved and more of a citizen of the world."

Miles wants to assure fans that some of the dark themes she's known for are still coming through, but she has written a new song called *It's Time to Let the Sun Have Its Day* and another titled *Is Anybody Happy?*

All this comes as she embarks on a new, quietly ambitious series of self-produced boutique recordings, drawn from her archive of more than 600 original tunes.

The new set, *Black Flowers, Vol. 1*, finds Miles alone with her guitar or piano and will be available through her website and at her shows.

She wants to issue a new volume every six months and already has the second edition in the can.

Miles mentions the periodical *McSweeney's Quarterly* as an inspiration for her new CD series, to be adorned with her own painting and photography.

"I wanted to have my songs together in one place, the way they were conceived and the way they're played. I mostly tour solo and my fans ask for solo recordings. Also, songs change over time and I wanted to record some of the older songs the way I play them now. I want each set to be different and they may grow more experimental as I go on. It feels very artistically freeing."

Sporting songs from her last few albums and one new number, *Black Flowers Vol. 1* is a compelling set that captures the intimacy of her shows and pushes the listener to reconsider the tunes from a new perspective. Miles still plans to record with a band occasionally, following her last two acclaimed albums, *Unravel* and *Love Sweet Love*.

Miles performs tonight at The Haven Social Club, 15120A Stony Plain Rd. Chloe Albert and Scott Cook open the show at 8. Tickets are \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door.

JAZZ DEBUT SPARKS

Toronto pianist Chris Donnelly is 25, currently on his first cross-country tour, promoting his debut album *Solo* (Alma Records). At first glance, the album has a typical mix of original tunes and covers -- Bill Evans, Bud Powell and others -- you would expect first time out, but Donnelly might surprise you.

It turns out that he's a major keyboard whiz and an intriguing arranger, influenced by multiple angles of the jazz piano tradition, classical and more.

"Everyone has their own mix," offers Donnelly. "I like to be very prepared with my arrangements before I start improvising but I've found my own balance of influences from great players and composers."

As examples, he lists spare, lyrical players like Bill Evans and Fred Hersch, bop masters like Bud Powell, and classical leanings to J.S. Bach and the minimalists, but there's a spark of something else.

The evidence starts with the first track on *Solo*, an inspired but atypical interpretation of Bill Evans' great ballad *Very Early*. Donnelly adds a whole new rhythmic underpinning and pushes the tempo up a bit, turning the classic contemplative piece into something unexpected.

It's a pleasure to hear an impressive new artist creating something fresh and different, very accessible and entertaining. Donnelly, who took his undergraduate and master's degrees in musical performance at the University of Toronto, is certainly a name to remember.

Catch him tonight at Four Rooms at 8.

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