

A Bonus Section for Our North Carolina Readers

Carolina Living

people & places™

Jazz singer Lois Deloatch
educates with music.
see page 10

Around Your State

Penland School—Arts and Crafts
In the Mountains

Greenville—Downtown Makeover

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Pinehurst—Birdhouse Architect

...and more

Southern Living

Songs In Her Soul

Singer and songwriter Lois Deloatch inspires with music that enlightens as well as entertains.



"I'm more concerned with the music getting exposure as opposed to whether or not I'm the one in the spotlight."

Lois Deloatch, singer and songwriter



PHOTOGRAPHS: J. SAVAGE GIBSON

Whether singing before an audience of one or thousands, Lois infuses her performances with an abiding love of the music.

I never set out to be a singer," says jazz musician Lois Deloatch. "It surprises me sometimes that people would actually pay to hear me sing."

After listening once, you know why Lois can easily command a fee from eager fans. With ballerina-like posture, sculpted cheekbones, a blazing smile, and silky smooth skin to match her velvety voice, Lois naturally wows audiences with her performances. But for her, recognizing jazz as an essential tradition inspires her to reach out to future jazz lovers in an academic setting.

This songbird chooses to bestow her love of music on students in public schools all over North Carolina, often at no charge. Sometimes Lois teaches a workshop on jazz—

complete with performance—the day before or after a scheduled concert. Schools often invite her in as part of their arts-education programs, giving her the opportunity to work with students on songwriting. Before leaving, she performs the children's songs in front of their classmates.

"I am very adamant about involving the students," she says with characteristic passion. "They need to be part of the experience. It has to be interactive. I'll instruct school-age students to sing their names or identify themselves with a sound. It's important to me that they leave feeling that they've had an engaging and fun experience."

Educating youth seems to be the best way to ensure this music's



"I am passionate about presenting African American music in productive and inventive ways," says Lois, shown here with fellow composer Tyson Rogers.

continuance. "I'd love to see jazz get the same radio airplay as mainstream genres," she says. "I'm more concerned with the music getting exposure as opposed to whether or not I'm the one in the spotlight."

Big Heart, Big Talent

Lois's credentials sing a song of accomplishment: She has headlined concerts across the country and opened for and collaborated with such legendary performers as Roberta Flack, Jerry Butler, Freddy Cole, and Arturo Sandoval. In 1998 Lois's debut recording, *Sunrise*, won widespread recognition for its original compositions, each penned by this gifted lyricist. Other albums followed, including *Reflections* and a collection of Negro spirituals entitled *Sometimes I Feel...*, which was arranged by pianist Barbara Cooke.

But, increasingly, Lois concentrates on performing as a tool to educate young people about music of African American origin—primarily jazz, blues, and spirituals. "Many of them have never even heard jazz or blues," she says.

All along, Lois has worked both in jazz and in fund-raising at Duke University, where she serves as the associate director of corporate and

foundation relations. In this less-musical role, she raises funds to benefit various university outreach programs and nonprofits in the Triangle and beyond.

Lois's educational outreach includes a program called "Crossing Jordan"—a lecture series in which the songstress uses traditional African American music to help people understand and deal with grief and mourning.

On her off days, you'll find Lois relaxing at home with her son, Kevin. She derives inspiration in simple things: from the paintings on the wall, vibrant with energy and color; to the CD player stocked with music ranging from Miles Davis to Ella Fitzgerald; to the sound of whistling from her husband, Ed (who says that's his only musical talent).

Reared in a household that attended Sunday worship service regularly, Lois got her musical training in her Margarettsville church's choir. She also focused her attention on her parents' old walnut piano, learning to play by ear. Early in her career, Lois attended college at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she sharpened her singing ability as a lead vocalist with a



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Lois Deloatch

gospel choir. In Lois, secular and sacred music meet.

Jazz 101

Always seeking to educate, this music maven brings you into the world of jazz and takes the guesswork out of where to start. "If you're only going to own one jazz compilation," she stresses, "try the *Kind of Blue* CD where John Coltrane is featured with Miles Davis." Lois preaches the importance of the recording. "Remember," she says, "there is no right or wrong way to listen. Just let the melody fill your heart."

FARRAH AUSTIN

For more information on Lois Deloatch, call (919) 682-1395, or visit www.loisdeloatch.com. Lois is represented by Horton Smith Management, a North Carolina-based artist management and booking agency.