

Singer/songwriter coming to Asheville

By Amy Jones

take5 Correspondent

November 16, 2007 12:15 am

If you lived through the 1980s and owned a radio at the time, then you heard Karla Bonoff's music. You may have heard it through the voice of Bonnie Raitt or Linda Ronstadt, but the songs were hers, written and delivered and often sung by this California singer-songwriter. We talked to Bonoff about the hits in her past and her live album in stores now.

Question: You've played a lot of live shows over the years. Did these tracks (from the new release "Karla Bonoff Live") have a special energy to them?

Answer: Sometimes it's a sound quality issue, and sometimes it's not a perfect recording. A lot of these came from one show in California. Everything just worked. Plus it documents the musicians that I've played with all these years, and it captured what we do together.

Q: Having had success in your career (charted singles like "Personally" and "Somebody's Eyes" from the "Footloose" movie helped define the decade), what is now your intention when you play?

A: People are still really excited. Part of the reason I made this live album is that the songs have just grown so much over 30 years. When I listened back to my first album (that I made) in my 20s, I'm not the singer then that I am now. And of course with age you just understand so much more, how things work, ideas.

Q: Do you ever feel that same excitement about your work?

A: You can't capture the newness, but the business is completely different now and the tour support of the big labels is just not there. I'm just glad people are still coming out to see us, and the thing that's cool is this is the first album I've made and financed, and now I'm excited to see that you can do this, just put it on your Web site and sell it.

Q: Even after 30 years, you're learning something new?

A: There was a period where we couldn't get a record deal to make an album, and you couldn't make it yourself either. So yes, it's great that you can work on a much smaller scale and survive. It's good and inspiring.

Q: Artists like to do new things, so how does it feel to be expected to go back, to play the singles every night?

A: Since I'm not writing a new album, it's not a big deal for me. The inspiration is tough for me. I have to get disciplined to do it, but there's nothing better than creating something out of the ether.

Q: When you were writing music so many years ago, did the ones that went on to be really popular have a different feel to them than anything else you recorded at the time?

A: They were all different, some came in five minutes and then some had music for a long time and no lyrics. But certain songs wear well, and the labels always asked me for uptempo songs for singles, and I really love some of the ballads most of all.

Amy Jones writes about music for the Citizen-Times.