

Amy Farris: From 'Sideman' to Soloist

Amy Farris' large eyes and cropped ringlets evoke the sass of a young Bette Davis, while her fishnets and platform boots walk straight out of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. But Farris sees in herself a *different* screen presence—that of George Burns' other half.

"I think when I'm onstage, I kind of turn into Gracie Allen," she says. "I get kind of silly." *Anyway*, the debut from this fiddler with a piercing vibrato, is equally diverse but far from silly. She glides through Texas Swing, jazzy torch numbers, traditional country and even a down-home rendition of "Poor Girl"—a cover of LA punk rockers X.

The theatrical Farris counts movie musicals and Dolly Parton as early vocal influences, but it was her classically trained violin skills that first garnered praise. After wowing locals of her native Austin with instant improvisational prowess, she began playing with Alejandro Escovedo and her hobby became a career. Escovedo's exposure ignited continuous interest in Farris' talents, allowing her to tour with musical luminaries Ray Price, Bruce Robison and Kelly Willis.

Now, Farris is moving from 'sideman' to soloist. "I'm so ready to do it," she says.

She hasn't always been eager for the attention, though. While playing Lilith Fair with Willis, Sarah McLachlan asked both ladies to sing "I Shall Be Released" for the estrogen-packed finale.

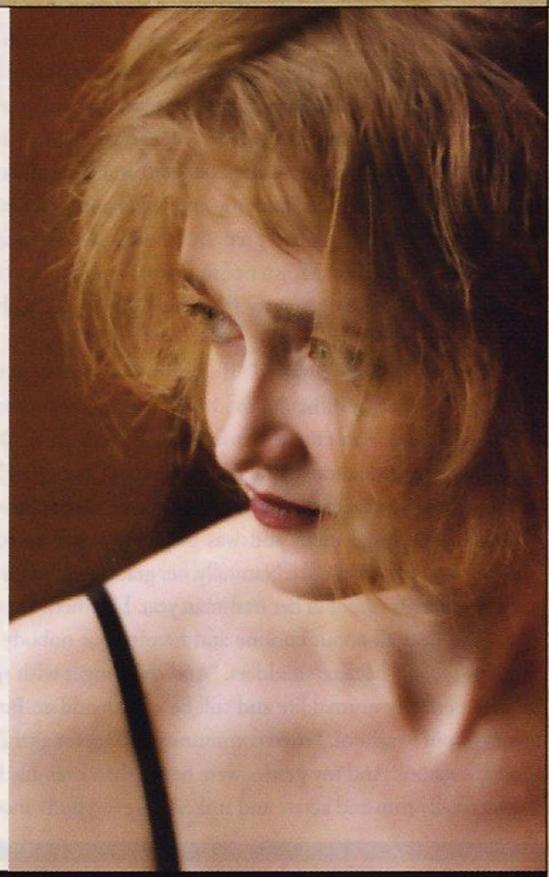
Farris tried to be 'out of the way,' keeping her place as a supporting musician, but the microphones on either end of the stage were full. Farris was center stage.

"I was, like, oh my God, what am I going to do?" she recalls. McLachlan, laughing at Farris' distress, pulled her to the center mic with Amy Ray of the Indigo Girls.

"They have these *huge* TV monitors [with] 20,000 people there."

"I'm sure the whole audience was going 'who is that?'" she says. "It was hilarious."

Welcome to the spotlight, Amy. Gracie would be proud. | CORY ALBERTSON



Amy Farris photo by Loren Minnick