

Rock trio ignites 'sound into light'

Activist, advocate and musician Ember Swift returns to Victoria with a new documentary DVD

Who: Ember Swift, Barley Wik
Where: Logan's Pub, 1821 Cook
When: Saturday, Oct. 29 @ 9 p.m.
How much: \$15

by Deena Kinarthy

It's not every day you meet an artist without an ego or a gimmick.

Ember Swift, singer and songwriter for the eponymous indie trio, champions an alternative generation that cares more about the message than money or fame.

She and her bandmates, violinist and backup singer Lyndell Montgomery and percussionist Adam Bowman, return to Victoria after a year-long stint in the Quebec/Ontario music scene, ready to release their new DVD, *Witness: Live in Australia 2005*.

"We haven't been to Victoria in a year, so it's really great to be coming back," says Swift.

The band's new DVD is a documentary film recorded live in Australia with an independent Australian filmmaker. The disc highlights 13 folk, jazz, funk and ethnic beat songs (some written by Montgomery) and features live footage from three different shows. It also offers a sneak preview of material from their next CD.

Swift's message-based music started on the band's record label in 1997. Swift's warm, socially aware character isn't just a front. With

their unique genre-hopping, advocacy-based music, the band creates art that incorporates a socio-political message, though Swift stresses, "I've never ever suggested that I have all the answers or I can *change* the world. I can only hope to contribute to the positivity, the hope for a better world . . . Performance is an extended dialogue. It needs to be an exchange between the audience and performers."

According to Swift, we have the opportunity to change how we think and see the world through conversation.

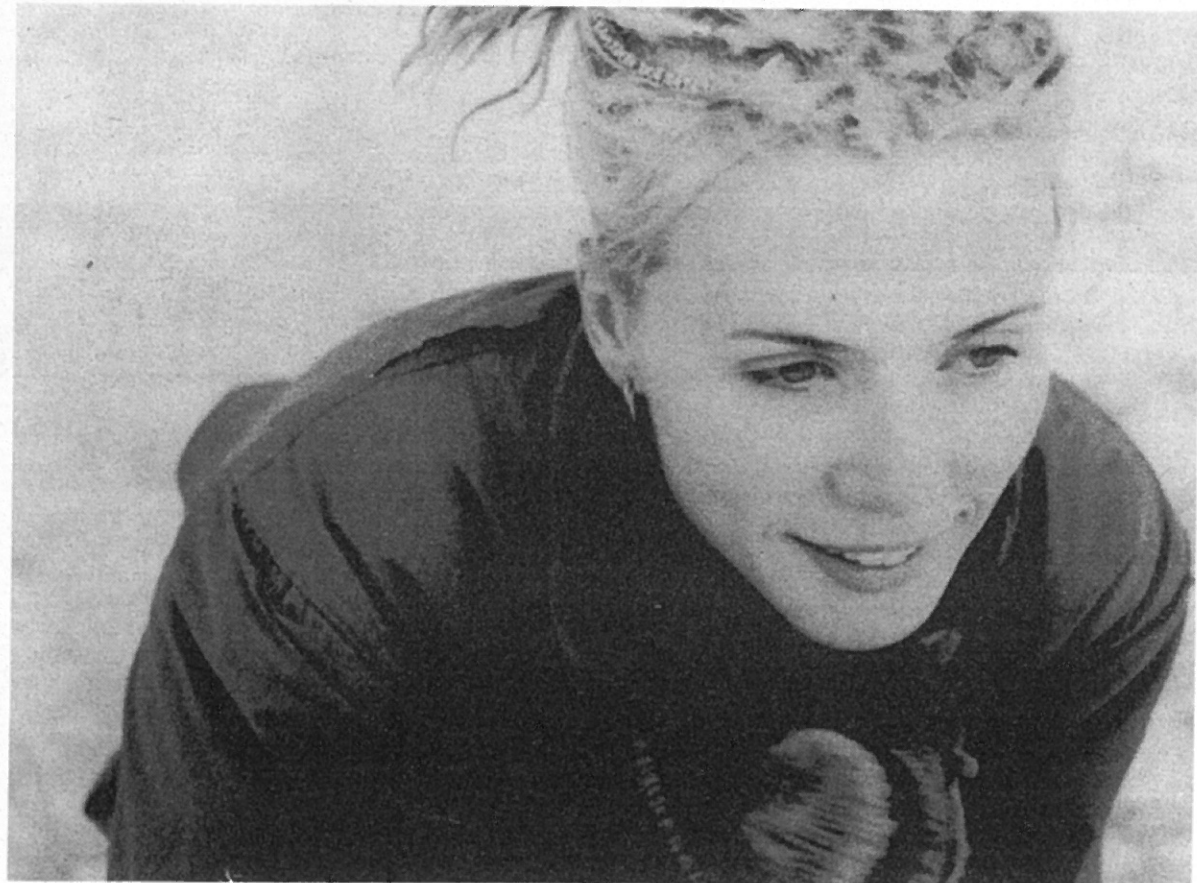
Swift's clever lyrics often touch on feminism, water-protection rights, food activism, the environment, and (of course) love, but she draws inspiration from the people she meets every day.

"You get into a conversation with somebody in the grocery store, and it's a really empowering conversation . . . You don't know if they're going to go home and look at the world a little differently based on what you said," says Swift.

Her down-to-earth approach and passion recollect Swift's biggest musical influence, Joni Mitchell, one of Canada's musical icons, and one of the most influential independent artists of the 20th century.

But do modern audiences believe that art can still be revolutionary?

"As artists I think we are really self-critical," says Swift, "but if we



PROVIDED PHOTO

Ember Swift formed her own record label, *Few'll Ignite Sound*, in 1997. It currently—and intentionally—only represents Swift's band.

don't see that we are worth listening to, no one else is going to believe in that. I think a lot of independent artists wait for other people to vali-

date them, or wait for the industry to validate them."

Swift advises other independent artists to believe in their own voice.

Her motto follows suit: "May the few who ignite sound fuel a change in the night. May the few who fuel change ignite sound into light."

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