

THURSDAY, January 21, 1993 • WEEKEND 9

# A happier, more direct Shawn Colvin heads west with a new attitude

By Susan Kelley  
Free Press Staff Writer

We caught Shawn Colvin for an interview as she packed up books in her New York City apartment in preparation for a move to Santa Monica, Calif.

"I just want to give it a try. I don't know. I like to shake things up once in a while."

She's been shaking up the music industry ever since her 1989 debut album "Steady On" received critical acclaim, with raves from such notables as Bonnie Raitt, Bruce Hornsby and the Indigo Girls.

The album delved into nighttime gloom and anxiety, with images of women in flames and insomnia and tunes like "Shotgun down the Avalanche" and "Diamond in the Rough."

"Steady On" went on to win a Grammy Award in 1991 for best contemporary folk recording.

"I expect to get challenges in my life and come to inner crises, but I've worked for this. This is my dream, to do this, and my life is changed," she said.

Change is apparent in her new album, "Fat City," that begins with the plea "Please no more therapy." It speaks of a fatter, more hopeful state of mind. As "Round of Blues" puts it, "I see lights in a fat city/I feel love again." There are more love songs here than on her earlier album, and more than a passing acquaintance with happiness.

"I think it's simpler. Happier, more direct. I think I'm more in it. I think my guitar playing is

more in it. More solid," she said.

She's more in it, but so are a host of accompanying musicians. Producer Larry Klein (aka Joni Mitchell's husband), Colvin's idol, Richard Thompson, Bruce Hornsby, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Booker T. Jones, The Subdudes, Chris Whitley, Bela Fleck, and Jim Keitner helped out on "Fat City."

Despite an interest in playing with other musicians, Colvin writes solo. "Fat City" is made up entirely of originals, except for a cover of Warren Zevon's "Tenderness on the Block."

Her songwriting method centers around keeping a notebook of lines, titles, bits and pieces that eventually come to fruition.

"There's always a resistance to do that, like

'How will this little thing I'm writing down ever become anything?' At most everything I write down becomes something. Where does anything begin. Where does a novel begin? It starts with the sentence."

"And there's a lot of sweat involved, too."

But that sweat has paid off in gigs and national recognition, which has brought her one step closer to fat city.

"It's the combination of getting really great opportunities as a result of sticking it out, and getting record deals. And growing up, too. I'm out of the angst-ridden poverty-stricken 20s, and it's good. It feels good."



Shawn Colvin is performs at 8 p.m. Saturday at the Flynn Theatre, 153 Main St., Burlington. Tickets are \$18.50. Townes Van Zant will open the show. Information: 863-5966.

and kitsch spawned the signature beehive hairdos, popularly known as B-52's, hence the group's name.

When it became clear that they might make a living at this, in 1978 they moved to New York City and played small gigs at CBGBs and Max's Kansas City. "Rock Lobster," released as an independent single, shot them into the stratosphere of New Wave frat rock.

The group has had its ups and downs. It lost guitarist Ricky Wilson to an AIDS-related cancer in 1985. His death shook up the band's creative process, a loss that was overcome in large part thanks to Strickland.

They bottomed out in 1986, when "Mesopotamia," and later "Bouncing Off Satellites" went virtually unnoticed.

In 1989, "Cosmic Thing" generated four videos, four million albums and a 14-month tour. "Love Shack" followed suit and put them back in the limelight.

When it came time to put together "Good Stuff," Cindy said no go. Schneider said her departure in 1991 was on amicable terms.

"She said, 'Look, I've been in the band for half my life.' She just wanted to take a break and spend time with her family, her husband and child," he said.

But Wilson's decision to split threatened the very sound of the B-52's. Wilson and Pierson's vocal blend was always a key component in the group's aural identity, and while Pierson could compensate in the studio through overdubs, finding someone to fill Wilson's shoes on the road was a challenge none of the three particularly relished.

"We basically knew what we wanted and how we wanted it to be performed, and it's just a matter of finding the right people to do it," Schneider said.

One of those people came in the form of "Twin Peaks" singer Julee Cruise.

"We could never really replace Cindy, but we wanted someone with a stage presence of her own and someone who could harmonize with Kate," Schneider said.

What is left of the B's continues to write. The method remains the same: record jam sessions on miles of tape, and then go back to pick out good stuff. Pierson and Schneider concentrate on lyrics, harmonies and melodies. Strickland takes care of instrumentation: bass, drums and guitar. Supporting musicians provide bass, percussion and embellishments.

"We really have to bounce ideas off each other," Schneider said.

They started touring in August and will finish the U.S. leg in February. They might tour Europe in the summer.

"We try to entertain ourselves as much as we do the audience — tell inside jokes, or word games."

After touring, they revitalize — Pierson and Strickland in upstate New York, and Schneider outside of New York City.

"We just have what we want to do. Fashion changes nowadays faster than you can change your clothes. If they (B-52 songs) were just camp or kitsch or whatever, they wouldn't last."

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## POTS

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Van Gulden. Adults \$3.50, children and seniors, \$1.50.

### South Burlington

**Bambino's Night Club**, Shelburne Road, South Burlington, 863-1108. Top 40 dance music, Friday and Saturday nights, 18 and older. \$3 for 21 and older, \$6 for 18-20.  
**Jazz at Jake's**, Jake's Original Bar and Grill, 1233 Shelburne Road, U.S. 7. 658-2251. Friday, Sam Armstrong and Friends, jazz night.

**Patches Pub**, Holiday Inn, Williston Road, 863-6363. Tonight through Saturday, The Andy Taylor Show. Mondays, Karaoke. No cover.

**Piano Bar**, Windjammer Restaurant, 1076 Williston Road, 863-6585. Friday pianist, Tom Berd.

**Rhinestones**, next to Bambino's, Shelburne Road, 863-1108. Thursday \$3, Sunday \$5, and Wednesday \$4 nights, hot country with WOKO and free dance lessons with Country Bound. All ages welcome. No cover for children.

**Tuckaway's**, Sheraton Burlington Hotel and Confer-

ence Center, 870 Williston Road. Thursday, John Cassel. Friday, Highland Weaver. Saturday, Bob Gesser, folk singer.

### Stowe

**Rusty Nail**, Mountain Road, 253-9444. Tonight and Friday, The Motown Review, 11-piece horn band from Connecticut. Saturday and Sunday, Eye to Eye, top 40 rock dance band.

### Vergennes

**Houndstooth**, 14 Green St. 877-2028. Friday and Saturday, The Truth.

### Waitsfield

**Mad Mountain Tavern**, 496-2562. Tonight, Bruce Isaacson and Christine Lynch. Friday and Saturday, Pure Pressure.

### Waterbury

**Holiday Inn**, Exit 10, I-89, 244-7822. Friday and

Friday and Saturday, The Imposters. No cover.

### Williston

**Williston Coffee House**, 702 Williston Road, 878-7122. Friday, Rachel Bissex. Saturday, David Young. \$5.

### Winooski

**Champion's Tavern**, 30 Main St., 655-4705. Tonight, Dave Abair Brothers. Friday and Saturday, Little Wing. Wednesday, Big Bass in Your Face.

**Sneakers**, 36 Main St., 655-9081. Tuesdays, Sneakers Jazz Band, \$2.

**Main Street Station**, 10 West Canal St., 655-6614. Thursdays, Karaoke Express, no cover. Cash prizes. DJ, every night except Sunday and Monday.

**Middle Earth Cafe**, 38 Main Street, Winooski. 655-7206. Friday, Stebbins and Co. Saturday, Dirty Blues Band. No cover either night.

**Waterworks**, Champlain Mill, 655-2044. Friday, Tim Glander's Magic ad Just Jazz. Saturday, Just Jazz.