

Ferguson more than just a funnyman

Written by Richard Amery

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Toronto guitarist Wendell Ferguson is not only pretty witty, but he's also an impressive guitar player. Ferguson, who plays the Wolf's Den, March 6 with Katherine Wheatley for the Lethbridge Folk Club, is the first to admit his mouth gets him in trouble, however he is also quick to admit Wheatley's down to earth and sensitive personality and stage presence provides a great counterbalance to his wicked and often politically incorrect humour.

"She's so sweet, people have been calling our tours, the 'loved her, hated him tour,'" laughed Ferguson from his home/ studio in Toronto where he works as an in demand session player.

"She can make you cry, I can make you laugh. It can get pretty emotional," he continued.

"My mouth used to get me fired pretty regularly. I have a strange sense of humour. I don't have a filter between my brain and my mouth. What ever I say just comes out of my mouth," Ferguson said.

"I used to play with Terry Sumsion and he's a pretty big fellow. One time we were on stage and someone pulled the fire alarm. So I said 'Watch out, Terry's backing up.'" So he got mad at me and fired me. The next year, he'd be mad at me or forget about it and hire me again the next year," Ferguson chuckled adding Katherine has also been subjected to some of his off colour jokes on stage. [7ouzvDdMJCM](#)

"She'll get mad at me as well. And she'll say 'don't ever tell a joke like that on my stage again.' I'll say something but I'll pay for it later. I know I'm an arsehole," he said.

It's not all about the jokes, Ferguson is also an exceptional guitarist. While he has played on CDs by Toronto humourists the Arrogant Worms, he also won the Canadian Country Music Association Guitar Player of the Year from 1995-99.

"I'm 55, I should be a lot better. I'll go to music showcases like NAMM and see these 18-year-old kids playing and they'll blow me away. I couldn't play like that when I was 18, just imagine where they're going to take it," said Ferguson who has toured with country musicians Duane Steele and bigger names like Shania Twain, the Dixie Chicks, George Fox, Cindy Church Murray McLauchlan and even Gordon Lightfoot.

He also toured with Quartette for 10 years.

"That was a great 10 years, though sometimes they'd only have 15 dates a year," he said.

"I can write an actual song. I've had more than 30 cuts on albums in Canada. I'm not a great singer, but I can put across the funny. It's not about the voice, it's all about the idea. Kris Kristofferson isn't a great singer, neither is Bob Dylan or Tom Waits. All kinds of people are great writers, but not great singers," he said.

Ferguson is making the most of his trip out west. He not only has shows booked all over Alberta, but has set up some session work in Edmonton for off days. While Katherine Wheatley does a lot of work in schools.

"When I was playing with Duane Steele, I basically lived in Edmonton for two years, so I have a lot of contacts there. I'll call them up and tell them I'm in town for a few days and ask if they have any work. Because every day you're out there on tour and not making money, you're losing money," he said.

He has just completed a new CD of instrumentals called 'Menage Moi,' featuring a music inspired by Chet Atkins's style of finger picking.

"I always liked listening to his finger picking but until recently, never learned how to do it because why would you want to listen to me do it when you can just listen to Chet? But in 1999 the style just called me so I practiced learning finger-style after 12 years of playing professionally. Which is a weird time in life to drag it out," he said.

The show begins at 8 p.m., March 6. Tickets cost \$20 for members, \$25 for non members.

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— *By Richard Amery, L.A. Beat Editor*{[comments on](#)}