


A woman with long dark hair, wearing a black sleeveless dress with lace detailing, stands in a room with Art Deco decor. She is looking down at her hands, which are clasped together. To her right is a black Yamaha grand piano. The room features wood-paneled walls, a staircase with a decorative railing, and several armchairs. The lighting is warm and dramatic, highlighting the woman and the piano. The text 'LILITH REINVENTED' is overlaid at the bottom left of the image.

LILITH REINVENTED

SARAH MCLACHLAN IS A STUDY IN PERPETUAL MOTION. Signed to Nettwerk Records while still in her teens, the Vancouver-based singer-songwriter has spent the past two decades selling more than 40 million records, winning three GRAMMYS® and eight Juno Awards, and performing countless benefits for charitable causes, from alleviating poverty in developing nations to animal welfare. She also established the Lilith Fair, one of the highest-profile music festivals of the 1990s, as a showcase for female-fronted bands and female solo artists. Now the mother of two and Officer of the Order of Canada is channeling her boundless energy into a new album, tentatively scheduled for release in April 2010—just in time for the soon-to-be-revived Lilith Fair tour next summer.



SO YOU'RE STARTING ON A NEW RECORD.

It would appear so! [Laughs.] I was playing the piano and writing just now. It's in the very early stages—yesterday was the first day in the studio, and the first session with Pierre [producer Pierre Marchand]. The way we typically work is I have ideas, we record them, and then we build on them. On some I'd like Pierre to help me out, so he's my writing partner as well. Typically we do nine or ten days a month of intensive work, work, work, and then we both go back to our families and continue to work on other things, and build the pieces we've been working on as well.

YOU'VE WORKED WITH PIERRE MARCHAND FOR A LONG TIME. HOW DID YOU TWO FIRST CONNECT?


He was on a list of producers for my second record, and when I met him, we just clicked instantly. My manager at the time was Mr. Big Man, and he was asking Pierre all these questions about what he was going to do. And Pierre looked at him and said, "I don't know. We're just going to explore and find out as we go." And I thought, "I love this guy!" And my manager was like, "I hate this guy!" Anyway, we were dear, dear friends by the third night in the studio. Throughout my life and career I've been incredibly lucky with the people I've surrounded myself with. The older you get, the more reflective, and hopefully thankful, you get for the gifts that you have—and man, oh man, I've just got the best people in my world.

YOU'VE JUST ANNOUNCED THAT YOU'RE STARTING UP LILITH FAIR AGAIN IN 2010.

Eleven years later, I think it's time. My two managers, my agent, and I have all had multiple children since Lilith, and life got really busy in different ways. But just this year we started saying, "You know, I could do it again now." Because that's what it really comes down to: Could I manage to get that big machine rolling again, and take the time and effort to do it right?

DO YOU ENVISION ANY CHANGES TO THE ORIGINAL LILITH FORMULA?

We're not reinventing the wheel, but what excites me most is that there's so much new talent out there. We'll definitely invite back a lot of the women who were on it the first time, and also bring in a whole bunch of new ones. We created a real buzz around Lilith in those three years. The first year was tricky because it was sort of slated as this white chick-folk fest, and I never wanted it to be that—I wanted the music to be really diverse, and it was just a matter of who said yes. As the years went on, more and more people started getting onboard. So I'm excited at the prospect of seeing how varied and diverse we can make Lilith this time around.



“WHEN YOU’RE PLAYING LIVE WITH A BAND, YOU NEED SOMETHING THAT HAS A CONSISTENT SOUND AND BRIGHTNESS SO THAT IT CUTS THROUGH. YAMAHA IS VERY SOLID IN THAT WAY.”

DOES CREATING MUSIC STILL MEAN THE SAME THINGS TO YOU AS WHEN YOU STARTED OUT?

I would say yes. Because I still derive the same amount of joy out of doing it. That hasn't waned. I love the creative process. I feel like I'm a much better songwriter than I was 20 years ago. I sure hope I am! Life experience helps with that, and just doing it a lot. But the process has changed for me, because when I had no kids, it was very easy to sequester myself on a mountaintop and write for six months. Now I have to fit it in between changing diapers and play dates and picking up the kids from school. I'm so thankful that I get to have that time with my kids, as well as keep my fingers and toes in the water of music. It's a wonderful place to be. Part of me wishes I had a little more time to give to music, but I don't resent or regret the time I'm spending with my kids for a second. I'm just so lucky that I got to a place in my career where I can kind of step back and still know that I could get back in it when I wanted to. I'm in the perfect position, really.

WHAT INITIALLY INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE SONGS?

I have been making music since I was four years old, and I always had a lot of ideas, but I never had the drive or desire to actually finish anything. I just had lots of ideas floating around, and it was fun to play them, and then flit about and play other things. But getting a record contract forced me to grow up a little bit and say, “Okay, you wanna write songs? Well, write them, record them.” So ultimately it was someone saying, “You've been given an amazing opportunity here. You got a record contract. We're allowing you to write your own songs—so do it!” I realized that if I screwed it up, I'd be an idiot, so I'd better get busy! It was a learning process of being disciplined and focused, which is not my strong point at the best of times. But it ended up being just fine.

DO YOU WRITE PRIMARILY ON PIANO OR GUITAR THESE DAYS?

Mostly piano, and it's been that way for a number of years. I'm lucky that I can play both quite well, so I typically start on piano, and if I get stuck I take it to the guitar, because different sounds can inspire you to go to different places.

YOU HAVE A YAMAHA C7 GRAND PIANO. DO YOU TOUR WITH IT AS WELL?

Yes, I do. I love my C7. She's come on the road with me everywhere. And when she doesn't, I have other C7s. It's just a great piano. It's really solid and consistent. When you're

playing live with a band, you need something that has a consistent sound and brightness so that it cuts through. Yamaha is very solid in that way.

SO YOUR PIANO IS A SHE. IF SHE WERE A PERSON, WHAT WOULD SHE BE LIKE?

My piano's personality would be—let's see, her name would probably be Bess, or Tess, and she would be solid, and wise, a little cheeky and fun, but just a big, solid, good heart, with a real sparkle. That's the cheeky part. *[Laughs.]*

WHAT DOES MUSIC LET YOU EXPRESS THAT YOU COULDN'T COMMUNICATE THROUGH ANOTHER MEDIUM?

There's a sense of emotional connectedness that I feel when I sing. I'm fascinated by my own flaws, by how they shape us as human beings, how they make us react to the world around us. Those are the big themes that play out in my music, but they're spoken and sung from an emotional point of view. Music creates this sense of openness in the universe—I open myself up to the world and the world opens up to me. It sounds really hippie-dippy and airy-fairy, but it's how I feel. And I think that's why I continue to love singing for people so much, because I get to be part of their world, and they're part of my world. I like that. I'm a people person. I like pleasing people, and seeing people smiling when I'm singing and playing. It just feels good.

YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH IN YOUR CAREER TO DATE. WHAT'S YOUR OWN MEASURE OF SUCCESS?

This is going to sound really obnoxious, but it's absolutely true: The way I measure success is, I try not to look at big pictures. I try to keep things small and simple. If I can look at myself in the mirror at the end of the day and think, “I did a good job today; I did the best I could,” then that's success. Perhaps I get to say that because I don't have the option of knowing what it feels like *not* to succeed in my professional life. But I never set out to achieve any of this—it was just a wonderful byproduct of getting to do exactly what I wanted to do. To create the kind of music I wanted to create. And thank you so much to Nettwerk Records and management for allowing me that freedom. I just got to do my thing, and thankfully other people liked it. I'm just really bloody lucky!