

sophie b. hawkins

Finds Happiness In The Wilderness

By Iris Wiener

Sophie B. Hawkins has, for many years, epitomized the singer behind the song. She is the voice behind the notes that incessantly linger in the minds of each and every person lucky enough to hear them. Truth be told, her work is synonymous with the few unique artists left in the business today. Famous in a subtle but endearing fashion, the New York native is best known for chart-topping hits "Damn I Wish I Was Your Lover", and "As I Lay Me Down". With the April 20 release of her new album *Wilderness*, she chips away at yet another layer of uninhibited spirit and energy, revealing a side of herself that the world has yet to see.

"I love the spirit of this record because I had decided subconsciously that I was going to make a record and release it on my own label. Something inside me said 'I really want to go out into the world really clean and really clear,'" she says excitedly. *Wilderness* marks the premiere release from Hawkins' Trumpet Swan Records, a fact that remained near and dear to her throughout the creation of the album. "I'm so tired of people saying 'We love you, but that's a horrible title,' or 'We're not going to promote you, we'll only give you 25,000 dollars for promotion', I mean what's that going to do? It's not going to do anything. My whole focus on this record is to be an entrepreneur as well as an artist, and it's working so far." Hawkins brings an unparalleled center into *Wilderness*, one that her fans have yet to see. "This album tells the audience that I'm a little brave, because I'm totally willing to make a record with no support. I'm also going away from the current. It's a very positive album, and in many ways it's a very unpositive time for people in the world today, and so I think it shows that I'm just going to persist in being positive and spiritually oriented and just sacrifice everything for what I feel is right."

intense side, is the best side. It has staying power. I don't have to be the this or that, I just have to be myself."

With its new style and enormous variety, *Wilderness* is sure to spark its fair share of favorites as well. "I think that this album stands apart, because in a way it reaches back to a much younger self, especially on songs like 'Blue' and 'Adrian'. And then it has sort of a sophisticated self sometimes, like with 'sweetsexy-woman', or 'Angel of Darkness', so I think that this album, to me, feels ageless. And there's an unabashed quality where the songs aren't trying to be self-conscious about anything. I wouldn't say that I was self-conscious on the other records purposely, but I think I did have the weight of the world on some of the records. I wouldn't say its better either, I think maybe it pulls them together, but I think people probably think the opposite. I would think that it has strains of each record on it. But maybe it doesn't."

One thing is for certain- Hawkins' sound is all her own. With America currently enthralled by the likes of mainstream 'music', Hawkins' originality may be just what the nation needs. "I feel, (and there are very few exceptions to this), that music is very homogenized, and that it now has so many people poking their little input. For example, a record company will say 'Well, we need to have a hit, so we need you to write with so and so, or you need this producer and then you need this remixer,' and they turn it all around and twist it all around and it ends up coming out the same. When I was on SONY, even though I had written 'As I Lay Me Down', even though I had written every song and had hits, they still said, 'For the third record we want you to write with so-and-so,' and I said 'Well, okay, but why?' I saw this as a sign of the industry. The record companies were getting so freaked out that in order to insure a hit, they would have you kind of dumb down, just homogenize you to the



more influence from Bugs Bunny than anything else. These things are in my head as I'm writing, the images. There are strange things that influence me."

What may have influenced Hawkins on *Wilderness* is not entirely clear, but it's evident that this work came from an inner tranquility that is left untapped by most people. "The title 'Wilderness', which refers to my own wilderness, is not this dark, scary place. My wilderness is this place of peacefulness and creativity and always a new possibility, like always a new way to overcome an obstacle, always find that road, and when it gets scary to go and face it and then move through it, and that's what I'm doing. So I guess if its successful, it should really encourage people to stand up for what they believe, and to not be beaten down by all the negative forces around them. I hope it's successful, because I'm giving a dollar of every record to a wilderness charity. That would be great because then all of my consciousness or my caring of animals and the environment would get to be on this album too. Basically the album says 'Stand for something, or you'll fall for anything.'"

With upcoming performances in her



hometown of Manhattan, Hawkins eagerly awaits the reactions to her newest work. "I hope that people can get in touch with their own creative self. When people come to me after a show and say 'because of you I started writing, I now play this or that,' I like it better than when they say, 'I adore you.' I like it when I tap into someone's energy to become who they need to become. I feel like that's what I have to do in the world," she says, happily imagining the possibilities that her music holds. "I hope that comes out in this album, and every album. I want to touch people in such a way that they can feel their own self. And I'm just going to keep going with that in mind." ■

...boy! Hawkins made waves with her first album, *Tongues & Tails*, a pop record with all the ingredients for the major hit,

point where they felt like, "Well, now we can release this because we feel your

"I love the spirit of this record because I had decided subconsciously that I was going to make a record and release it on my own label. Something inside me said 'I really want to go out into the world really clean and really clear.'"

"Damn I Wish I Was Your Lover". After winning a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist (and two albums later), she quickly racked up hits ranging from "Lose Your Way", and "Only Love" to "As I Lay Me Down", a Billboard chart topper for a record-breaking sixty-seven weeks. "I love 'As I Lay Me Down,'" Hawkins says of her claim to fame. "I was extremely proud of it because that song came out of such a difficult period of my life, and to me, it captures my childhood perfectly. And it captures pure love perfectly, and then also, when I wrote it, a lot of people said 'Well that's not a good song', and I said to myself, well this is my biggest song ever, what are you talking about? I knew it, and nobody around me knew it! The record company didn't know it, and when I had finally recorded it...boy! Was it a fight to even get them to promote it. And now it's the longest playing hit song in the history of radio, and it still gets outrageously played. I'm very proud of that because that shows me that the purest side of me, and the most

chances of having a hit are better.' And that's the way they market it. How much originality can you have in that environment? I always wonder, would Joni Mitchell be able to get songs on the radio today? It seems like in order to get a song on the radio, you have to work with this guy, that guy and the other guy. It's too much of a business, the common denominator is very low. The bar is very low in terms of quality songwriting."

Songwriting comes naturally to Hawkins however, and she feels that good stories have influenced her more than anything else when it comes to putting her own pen to paper. "I fell in love with Virginia Woolf, she really influenced me, I don't know how. She gave me the guts. I loved Ernest Hemingway at a certain point. I loved lots of books as a kid. You know books like 'Curious George' or 'Country Bunny', these books I remembered more than anything. And Bugs Bunny. The song 'California, Here I Come' on my first album, there was