



Wilsonville musician Naomi LaViolette takes career to the next level with debut album

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Rachel Stark, The Oregonian
By



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Rachel Stark/The Oregonian

Naomi LaViolette will officially release her debut album Jan. 27. "I wanted to take my time," she said of the album that she spent two

WILSONVILLE – The ideas come to Naomi LaViolette in the middle of the night. She'll lean over in bed, find a scrap piece of paper on her nightstand, and jot down a lyric.

It happens when she's running, too, and when she's driving in the car. She'll hum a melody into her iPhone, then save it for later.

They come from the Oregon Coast, a rainy day, a heartbreak. And now for the first time, the Wilsonville singer and songwriter's best ideas are compiled into one debut, self-titled album.

The album features 10 original songs and arrangements of George Gershwin's "Our Love is Here to Stay" and Joni Mitchell's "Both Sides Now." It's a lineup that LaViolette, 35, says falls somewhere between folk and jazz, with a touch of Sarah McLachlan, Norah Jones and her songwriting idol, Mitchell.

She'll officially release the CD on Jan. 27 at a show at the

**Naomi
LaViolette's
album release
show**

years making. "I wanted this to really take things to the next level."

Portland jazz
club **Jimmy**

8 p.m. on Jan. 27

Jimmy Mak's, 221
N.W. 10th Ave.,
Portland

\$10 cover

Call 503-295-6542
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Mak's. Then, the Portland native who has performed at local venues for more than six years will finally feel she's arrived.

"I spent so many years learning classical music and so many years listening to great jazz artists and... living in the reality of other people," LaViolette said. "This is an album of original material and it's like I'm finally finding a place to stand."

LaViolette's musical journey began at the age of 4, when her father discovered she had perfect pitch. Music, she says, chose her. She attended Sunset High School in Portland and the University of Puget Sound, where a professor suggested she major in music. Hesitant but encouraged, she listened. She went on to earn her master's degree in classical piano at Portland State University.

LaViolette married and moved to Wilsonville eight years ago. She and her husband Jeff, a mortgage banker, have a 6-year-old boy and 4-year-old girl.

Through the years, she has juggled the responsibilities of motherhood with teaching music at Clackamas Community College, playing with chamber choirs and honing her own sound. She saved every earning from gigs so she could one day record an album.

Two years ago, the musician connected with Dean Baskerville, a Portland producer and engineer who's worked with Sheryl Crow and local bands Pink Martini and Everclear. Under his direction, a product took form.



"What I've been doing these last two years is taking (my music) beyond a means of self-expression into something I can perform for an audience, and that would not just be my story but something they can connect with," she said.

The feeling of establishing herself on new ground inspired, in part, LaViolette's favorite song on the record, "Somewhere New to Stand." On a more personal level, the song portrays the struggle of finding a new normal after a relationship crumbles.

It also symbolizes for LaViolette the challenge, and reward, of songwriting.

"The first half of it flowed out really easily, and then I got to the bridge," she said. "I had this idea of a heart on fire. And Dean said, 'OK, I've heard that a million times. Can you say it a different way?'"

One, two, six drafts later and LaViolette found a keeper she's proud of. Fresh, honest lyrics about a common pain. *"Come on, gotta keep runnin', to somewhere filled with fire/That doesn't burn, but takes these cracks and tears, and fills them up with light."*



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Courtesy of Naomi LaViolette

Naomi LaViolette's CD cover

The song of empowerment encapsulates the entire album, LaViolette said. A flaming heart sits in the corner of the CD cover.

The album features guitarist Tim Ellis, bassist Bill Athens, and drummer Jeramy Burchett. LaViolette learned harmonica for one ensemble. Keeping with the local theme, quinoa from **Bob's Red Mill** was used in a shaker.

The album will be sold at **Music Millenium**, 3158 E. Burnside St. in Portland. It also can be purchased for \$15 at her shows or **her website**. Her single, "Words or Not," is available on **iTunes for digital download**. The rest of the album will be listed on iTunes in late February.

LaViolette plans to perform in Seattle and California this spring with the hopes of establishing a West Coast presence.

This month, she'll submit her music to the Internet radio service Pandora. Maybe, she thinks, she'd be added

to the Sara Bareilles or Sarah McLachlan channels.

"If the right person hears it, you never know."

— **Rachel Stark**

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