



Aimee Mann talks Queen show; “Portlandia”

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[Aimee Mann](#) has a bit of a backlog and that's good news for area fans.

The Grammy-winning and Academy Award-nominated singer/songwriter has plenty of new material these days: new tunes that are headed for a follow-up to her 2008 release “@#%&*! Smilers” and new songs slated for what will be a musical based on her 2005 album, “The Forgotten Arm.”

Some of that newborn material will end up in Mann's songbook when she kicks off a limited eight-date East Coast tour tonight in Metuchen, N.J. before stopping at World Cafe Live at the Queen in Wilmington Saturday night at 8 for [a sold out show](#).

No release date is set for the musical, which has proved to be a bit more of a challenge than Mann had originally thought.

"I thought I would be the exception when people warned me it would takes years [to develop a musical]," Mann, 50, says in a recent interview. "Now I'm starting to understand how and why it does take years."

Mann, who will be backed by longtime collaborators Paul Bryan and Jamie Edwards for the tour, made a comedic splash earlier this year as a guest on the recently-renewed IFC comedy "Portlandia," co-starring Fred Armisen and Carrie Brownstein. In the episode, the pair realize that their new maid is actually Mann. As fans, they immediately recognize her and begin lamenting about illegal downloads forcing musicians into making money in other ways.

Mann got her start in the '80s with New Wave band 'Til Tuesday before going solo, racking up awards for her "Magnolia" soundtrack in 1999 and gaining a loyal fan base with her consistent output.

We talked to Mann, who is married to musician Michael Penn, about her "Portlandia" cameo, the current state of the music industry and if she would ever perform at a fan fest for cult favorite "The Big Lebowski," the 1998 film directed by the Coen brothers and co-starring Mann as a Nihilist with nine toes.

So what's the status of this musical you have been working on?

We have been writing the book — the part that's not music — with a writer, but it didn't work out. So now it's up in the air and I'm sure we'll figure it out. But at this point, it's time to make a new record, so I'm kind of onto that. So I may play a new song from the record.

Wow. All sorts of new stuff going on.

Yeah, I don't want to load people up with too much new stuff because that is kind of difficult as a listener, but there will be two or three new things in there. And I try to have a couple of songs from each record in there too.

With "Portlandia" out now and being well-received...

I love that show. I think Fred Armisen is a genius. I always have.

You spent a lot of time at the Largo nightclub in Los Angeles at a time when comedians like Patton Oswalt and Paul F. Tompkins and musicians began doing shows together in a cool, creative environment. What did you get out of it?

I was just a very small club and now it's in a small theater, so it's different and not quite as loose as it used to be. Los Angeles is so spread out, so when there's a place where people that you like are performing, then it becomes a bit of a magnet for people looking to run into friends. Monday nights were comedy nights and we started to go and that's how we met all the comedians. Then we started blending our shows together.

Does your relationship with Fred [Armisen] go back to that time? And how did he ask you to be on his show?

Yeah, I actually met Fred at Largo right before he moved to New York. So he just called me up and the plot for that "Portlandia" episode came up because Carrie [Brownstein] had hired a maid service and the maid that came was somebody who played in a band that she knew. So it was this bizarre experience so they took that and magnified it.

That episode dealt with illegal downloading and the music industry...

Not that I knew of. I think it was intended to just be a bizarre, oddball circumstance. I think people are taking it as, "Oh my God, these poor musicians are out of work." Maybe they had that in their minds, but it was never discussed.

You have seen the music industry evolve over your career, especially over the past 10 years or so. Jon Bon Jovi recently made headlines saying that Steve Jobs of Apple killed the industry.

Apple actually thought of a way for downloads to make money, so I think it's more that Apple was the sandbags that stopped the flood of [illegal] downloads.

How different is it now trying to do what you do?

A whole source of income is gone, but the necessity to make records is still there. But now there's just no money to pay for it. It's weird. Sometimes there is a sense like, "Why am I making a record again? It won't make its money back and I'm doing it for what? My own ego?" I don't feel that is the right reason. So there's a feeling of not being sure why you continue to do things the way you used to do them.

One thing I have to ask you about is "The Big Lebowski" — I'm a big fan just like any good American, I guess. Can you tell me what your reaction was when you first read the script?

I don't think I was sent a script. I think it was a weird accident. I had a friend who was one of the casting directors on that movie and she asked, "Are you interested in auditioning for this part?" because someone had suggested me for it. I said, "Why not?" At the time, I was in the middle of record business hell and was really disgusted with that. I would have tried anything that wasn't music at that time. When the Coen brothers want you to audition for a movie, you show up and do it.

Have you ever been invited to a Lebowskifest where fans gather to watch the movie and bowl? It seems like you would be a perfect fit since they have staged concerts with bands like My Morning Jacket and the Felice Brothers in the past.

I think my manager once said the festival wanted me to appear, but not play. I don't know what I'm supposed to do? Wander around in a

costume? I don't know what goes down there. It seems a little awkward.

Yeah, there might be a lot of guys throwing plastic, severed toes at you.

I guess. I don't want to find out. [Laughs.]

You've acted here and there throughout your career and you've also worked closely with P.T. Anderson on the soundtrack for "Magnolia," which is a great film with great music that really fit perfectly together. Have any soundtracks struck you like that?

Any favorites that you go back to?

I don't think there are a lot of soundtracks like that unless you go back to Simon & Garfunkel with "The Graduate."

Is that something you would be up for doing again?

Oh sure, but I really think that's once in a lifetime. So few directors, first of all, use one person to write the songs. And so few have a relationship with music the way Paul does.

You are now part of the Twitterverse at @aimeemann. Do you think it has brought you closer to your fans or do you get haters on there that freak you out?

On Twitter, I don't have much to say day-to-day, but what I do like to do is live tweet events like the Oscars. I usually get together with our friends Tim Heidecker [of Adult Swim's "Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!"] and his wife, Marilyn, and do that, which is great. If there's something really insulting that gets said in the room, I can attribute it to Tim.

IF YOU GO

Who: Aimee Mann with opening act Ivan & Alyosha

When: Saturday, 8 p.m.

Where: World Cafe Live at the Queen, 500 N. Market St., Wilmington

Cost: \$37-\$40

Tickets: Sold out