

Singer-Songwriter Rachel Sage To Open Binghamton Live's 2019 Concert Series at Atomic Tom's

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Independent awarding winning singer-songwriter Rachel Sage is well-known to Binghamton area music lovers. The Manhattan-based singer songwriter and all around artistic talent packed the Cyber Café West with regularity, belted her brand of alt-pop on First Fridays at the Bundy Museum's third floor gallery alongside local artist Angela Cook, and even joined Judy Collins at BU's Anderson Center. After several years away from the her Southern Tier fans, she's returning for the inaugural show of Binghamton Live's 2019 Concert Series held at Atomic Tom's. She'll swing by Binghamton while touring in support of soon-to-be released album, *PseudoMyopia*, dropping March 22nd. The work is an acoustic reimagining of her acclaimed 2018 album, *Myopia*, featuring her triumphant single "Alive," celebrating the art of seizing the moment despite the distracting contrivances of modern life. Her Binghamton stop follows an appearance at the annual Austin, Texas, multi-media extravaganza, South by Southwest (aka SXSW). It's her only date scheduled upstate New York and one of the few before she ships off to the UK, and then the West Coast, for rest of summer.

Early in February, Rachel called into WBDY-LP (99.5 FM), Binghamton's community radio station and Carousel partner in local arts and culture coverage, to discuss her music, upcoming tour, and the record label she started over 20 years ago.

WBDY: You're based in Manhattan, but are no stranger to Binghamton.

Rachel Sage: Actually, one of my earliest performances was with Judy

Collins at the Anderson Center. I performed at a wonderful outdoor festival called The Wildflower Festival. That's really where I got to know her, so I credit Binghamton for bringing me together with Judy Collins.

WBDY: You've also played at the Cyber Cafe and Bundy Museum of History and Art.

RS: Yes, I've really enjoyed performing alongside beloved local artist Angela Cook of Angela's Abstract. She's had me perform for first Fridays at the Bundy. This time will be exciting because I've never played this particular venue, Atomic Tom's.

WBDY: Artists come to music all different ways, how did it happen for you?

RS: I've been playing piano since I was about two and a half. It's really been a lifelong language of expression. I also have a background in dance and theater. So, I'm just the most artistic gal you'll ever meet! When I was six or seven years old at sleep away camp, I'd write little songs about my friends and our dynamics, but also things that I knew absolutely nothing about. I'd just parrot adult themes from the radio by writing love songs. Eventually, my parents had to sit me down and let me know that it wasn't really appropriate for a 7 year old to be singing about making love, which—of course—I didn't know what that meant. I was a big fan of the Bee Gees at the time and just trying to get my craft happening.

WBDY: You've had a really impressive music career, releasing over a dozen albums in the last twenty years, with another on the way. You've been favorably compared to Bob Dylan and had numerous awards and accolades. Just last year, *Myopia*, your most

recent album, was voted in the 40 best albums of 2018 by L.A. Music Critic. Is there an award or an accomplishment. That was particularly meaningful to you?

RS: I don't really hone in on awards. They are beautiful opportunities and markers of things you've done already. Something that really moved me, however, was an opportunity I had, not too long ago, to compose a song and perform it at a charity event for an organization called Tuesday's Children. They're an amazing charity that helps support young people and spouses of people who perished in 9/11. They have become a support system and part of the family for people who went through it and lost loved ones, and continue to need support. I was in this room full of beneficiaries of that charity and people who donated, when I had the opportunity to perform "God Bless America," in addition to my own original song, "The Tide," which I composed for that event. There was something about performing that Irving Berlin patriotic classic in a room full of kind hearted people; I just remember feeling so honored. As we say in Yiddish, I got pretty verklempt.

WBDY: Speaking of performing, for people who haven't heard your sound, what can people expect at the upcoming show?

RS: Overall, I'm kind of a combination of Carole King and Bette Midler. For this performance a wonderful violinist who also sings, Kelly Halloran, and will be with me. I think what we do is a combination of classic singer-songwriter poetic fare, but I also really try to have fun as a performer and an entertainer in an almost comedy way. I tell a lot of stories and I really dip into my history as a world troubadour. I have a lot of fun poking fun at myself and my family background, and the ups

and downs of the music business. I also like to share my Jewish heritage with audiences, so I may throw a Yiddish tune in there.

My goal, through sharing my own stories is to encourage other people to be more empowered in their own lives. There's also a bit of just pure good, old-fashioned escapism. I hope to transport listeners to another place or to think about issues or experiences in a new way. Hopefully, by the end of the night, we're all a bit of a family and we've been through a catharsis together.

WBDY: So, you have a new album coming out later in the year called *PseudoMyopia*. It's an acoustic version of your previous album, *Myopia*. Where did the inspiration for that project come from?

RS: Well, *Myopia* came out last year. It's a themed album approaching the idea of vision, using the metaphor of nearsightedness to approach all different topics. It was my 13th full album and was a really exciting project for me. I pushed myself in a lot of new ways, especially playing a lot of electric guitar on it. Then, over the winter, I had this idea to create an acoustic version, which is actually more representative of what I do live. When I tour, my performances tend to be much more stripped down and intimate. So, while I had a whole bunch of fun in the studio making *Myopia*, with its layers upon layers of textures and electric instruments, *PseudoMyopia* is my unplugged version.

WBDY: So, we're going to be hearing songs off your newest project at the show coming up?

RS: Absolutely. I've rearranged every single song to be much more intimate and essential. Some of the songs that



Rachel Sage

I played on electric guitar prior will now be acoustic. It is definitely a whole refresh and reset on the material. The album also features several special guests, including Ben Butler who plays mandolin and guitar. He's toured with Sting and George Michael, performing all around the world. I'm so honored to have him part of the project.

Doing this new project was a real gift. People will often ask me how I know a song is done. The truth is, I don't ever feel like they're done. I evolve live in a way that's very different from my work in a studio. So, the opportunity to reproach these songs after having performed them was exciting for me. I'm also interested to hear what people feel about the difference between the two albums. Hopefully, it's like seeing your favorite band at a big arena and then catching them at a small club, that's the contrast I hope people will enjoy.

WBDY: Uniquely all of your records have been released from your own label, Mpress records. How did this

come about?

RS: Well, I was making pretty high quality demos—they could've almost be an album—since I was 14 or 15. When I went to college I was very determined to keep chipping away at these demos during vacations. Eventually, I had something that I felt like an album. At that point, I could have either hire a lawyer and done the whole smoozey music business thing—have people shop it to major labels, try to do showcases, and build an industry buzz—or I could just figure out how to release the damn thing myself. Being someone not easily intimidated, for which I credit my very empowered feminist mother, I made a point to see who was releasing things independently.

