

Musician repelled by attitudes on coasts Songwriter returns to Midwest

By Andrea Christensen
Staff Reporter

Conventional wisdom says that to be a success in the music business, an artist must live on the East or West coasts. But Mimi Schneider has never been bound by conventional wisdom, and she has decided to make her music in the Midwest.

Schneider has performed on both coasts but found she preferred her hometown of Council Bluffs, Iowa.

"I came back because of the expense and the attitude of people on the coasts," Schneider said. "They think we're geographically disadvantaged, and they see us as consumers of culture. But that's just not true. I have more access to the information I need to make music here than I had on either coast."

A producer at KIWR radio in Council Bluffs, Schneider has just released "Catasterpiece," her first full-length album. The LP is about her experiences as she moved back to her hometown.

"There is a beginning, middle and end to the story on this record," she said. "It's about things I had to deal with when I found myself living in the town where I grew up after being away for many years."

Schneider left the Midwest after receiving her bachelor's degree in American studies from the University of Iowa. She was a member of an acoustic trio called The Stouthearted. The group moved to the San Francisco Bay area in June 1985. The

move was unsuccessful. Despite some good reviews, the band broke up.

"We weren't handling our affairs in a big city manner," Schneider said. "We all had day jobs, so we didn't have time to attend all the dinner parties and do the schmoozing that's needed to get recognized."

SOUNDS

Schneider said that returning to Council Bluffs was a big risk, but one that paid off.

"I've always struggled to be myself, and try to cram that down people's

throats. So returning home could have been the worst thing that ever happened, but I turned it around and made it a catastrophe with a good save, a catastrophe."

"Catasterpiece" was recorded live-to-tape in one 10-hour recording session. Most of the cuts feature simple vocals, two acoustic guitars and a snare drum. The album addresses the problems of isolation, failed relationships and cultural snobbery. Despite the bare instrumentation and the serious issues that "Catasterpiece" addresses, Schneider insists it is not a folk album.

"I'm not thrilled with being labeled a folk singer," she said. "Ameri-

cans hear the word folk and they think of a land where it is always 1971 and performers are boring them with their innermost thoughts. That's not what this album is about."

Instead, Schneider considers herself a songwriter, one who is interested in different music styles. She even plans to do a pop album one day.

"Right now I don't have access to the equipment to do a pop album," Schneider said. "Rock bands are expensive. But even though we didn't have a band for 'Catasterpiece,' the album is more like a skewed version of country music than folk. It's not twangy, but it deals with adult themes."

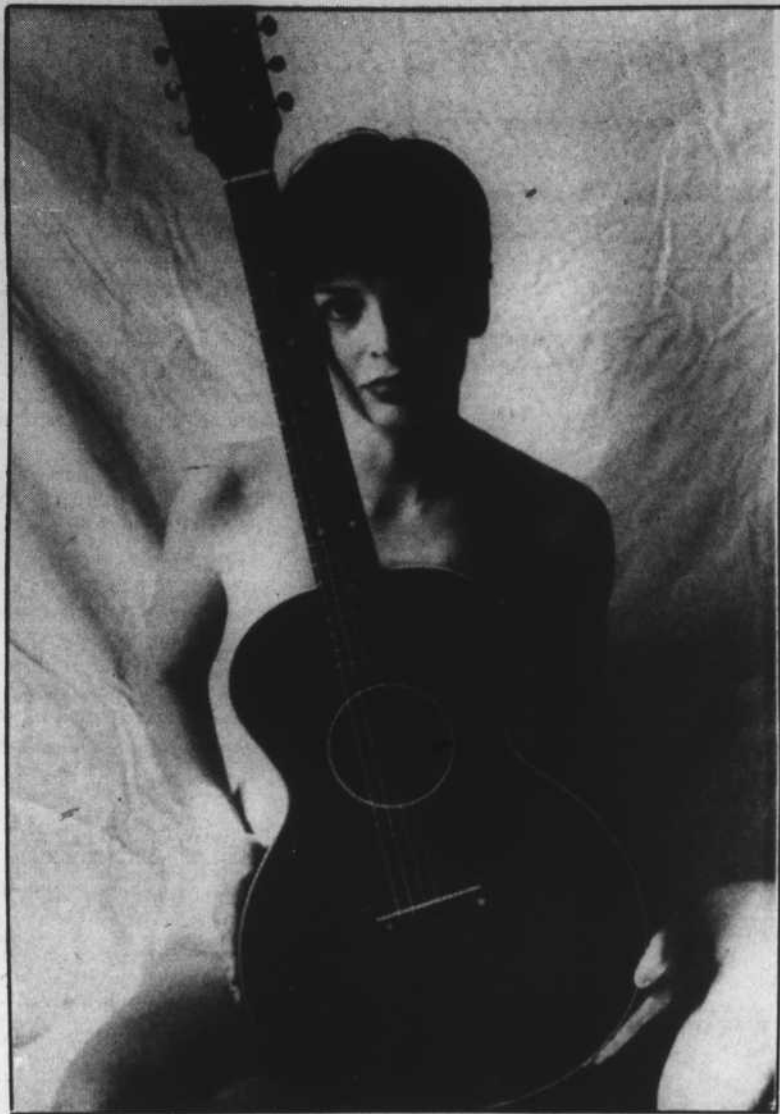
Schneider said she gets her inspiration from pop, country and the old standards she listened to as a child.

"Listening to AM music in the '60s, I got hooked on the songs of my parents' generation, and I think that has influenced my work," Schneider said.

"This is a strange business. You can go for years as an unknown. But you always hope you'll reach the right person who will make all the difference in your career," Schneider said.

"You can't wait around for some major corporation to validate what you're doing," she said. "You have to live life instead of waiting for life to live you."

"Catasterpiece" is not available in Lincoln stores, but it is available at Homer's Music in Omaha.



Courtesy of Indelible Records

Council Bluffs, Iowa, native Mimi Schneider has just released her solo debut "Catasterpiece."

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THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



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- 14 Swiftly, to a poet
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- 22 Bridge ace Culbertson
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- 25 Reserved; retiring
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by Bill Watterson