

Holly Penfield— International Entertainer Returns Home

By Randolph L. Tom



Holly, a London Sensation



Holly at 18



Holly performing at the Orinda House, May 25

Photo Rick Konlon

One time rock 'n roller Holly Penfield is a local success story with an enviable history as an international entertainer. Raised in the East Bay, honing her singing and writing skills while at Campolindo in Moraga, Holly has returned home to perform in cabaret style at the Orinda House for several dates in June before she heads back to her adopted home of London, England.

While being trained and nurtured as a singer by the legendary Judy Davis, the voice coach for Barbra Streisand and Frank Sinatra, among others, Holly began her professional singing career at the tender age of 13, leading her band, Love Agency, and playing multiple shows throughout the Bay area. At that time of musical history in the early 70s, like a lot of young singers, Holly stuck to playing covers of rock 'n roll classics for "chick singers." Moving from Linda Ronstadt's "Different Drummer" to Judy's Collins' classic, "Both Sides Now," Holly sought inspiration and contacts for her singing career, moving to Los Angeles where she secured recording contracts with

producers Mike Chapman and Nicky Chinn, who were responsible for producing multimillion dollar sellers for cutting edge women rockers like Pat Benatar, Tina Turner and Deborah Harry of Blondie.

Inspired by the singing and writing of one of New York's legendary women singer-songwriters, Laura Nero, Holly spent some time in New York City, paying her dues while writing a vast collection of both pop and more self expressive personal songs. With her music sensibilities changing in the rock 'n roll life of hanging with the stars of the day, Holly was enticed to seek her fame and fortune and stake her career in London. To satisfy her recording commitment with her Los Angeles label, Holly sought a producer who understood her music and need for expression. As fate would have it, Holly not only identified a great producer for her music, but found a soul mate and supportive spouse, Ian Ritchie. An accomplished saxophonist, Ritchie, who will be performing with Holly at the Orinda House on June 17,


also has an active musical career as part of Pink Floyd's Roger Walters' touring band. Like most performers, they check their Blackberries to see when they'll see each other.

London has been good to Holly, where she has been headlining for a decade in venues throughout Europe, bringing her acclaimed "Fragile Human Monster Show" to an enthusiastic and appreciative audience. In so doing, Holly has made the successful transition from pop rock singer-songwriter to jazz and cabaret performer. With her loyal following in the UK, where she has played for many of that country's dignitaries, including Prince Charles and Princess Diana, Holly is able to claim a home at the prestigious Dorchester on Park Lane where she performs to loyal patrons such as Shirley Bassey, Lionel Ritchie and Kate Moss.

In bringing her energetic cabaret style to her hometown, Holly is seeking to give a boost back to the community that has given so much to her. She fondly remembers her time in the bucolic setting of the Lamorinda area and


knows that performing locally to support the businesses that make up the community is extremely important to maintain its vitality. As Holly indicated, "Orinda is home for me, and I'd like to eventually return. The Orinda House is a great forum to perform to an intimate crowd and I'd like to do my best to support its owner, Ron Bonner, to help ensure its viability."

With her eyes firmly focused on that goal, Holly is actively looking to renew her career in the States, this time emphasizing her ample entertainer skills in combination with her formidable singing capabilities. As she looks for professional representation in the States, Holly hopes to build on her well-developed reputation as an exciting cabaret and burlesque entertainer and dynamic singer, as evidenced by her latest CD "Holly's Hot Spot." In addition to her Father's Day performance, you can see Holly at the Orinda House on June 23rd and 30th. Check her out and support our local dining and entertainment scene. I'm sure you'll enjoy the show.




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