

RAITT OF RECOVERY

One hazy afternoon in Los Angeles earlier this month, Bonnie Raitt talked to 7 Days about the, uh, personal climate that gave rise to her new album, Nick of Time.

"Y'know, I've been 'Bonnie Raitt' since I was 20, and I know how to be this rowdy, partying, raucous woman. But at 35 or 37, you look around, and you don't have what you thought you were going to get out of this persona. I'd been a role model for people to be independent and strong and not take any shit from their relationships, but that blues-mama thing ended up not working. I was really broken down from being dropped by Warner Bros., and I had a bad split-up in my personal life. Eventually, I just stayed numb all the time. I mean, I didn't drink or do drugs before I played, but afterwards I would, y'know, try not to think too much about what was going on 'cause I was in a lot of pain. My personal-appearance price had plummeted and I didn't have any album to support my tour, so I had to stay out on the road to keep my name around and make a living, and I felt really, really angry and betrayed, and I wasn't taking responsibility for the fact that I might have contributed to some of this stuff.

"Luckily I put on weight, so that was like a signal that I had to stop. I mean, people don't mind if their blues singers are kind of chunky, but I looked and felt completely *not like myself*. I really thought I was dying. I broke, I just broke, y'know? And I decided to get some help.

"I went to AA and I started hanging out with a different set of people—higher on the food chain of consciousness. I never realized that you wouldn't have to become some kind of Moonie. I thought I'd have to lose my sense of humor, and I was so proud of being the last girl singer that was still drinking. But the hard thing about being straight is you gotta really look at all the things that make you stay in weird situations. So I got some therapy, and I'm still doing that.

"This sounds like a recovery rap, but I feel kinda like I did when I was 20. I've got a new record company, and I'm single, and I'm really excited by what's going on. When I say, 'I will not be denied' and 'I want a real man'—every single lyric on this record—I mean it more than anything I've ever meant. It's hard to become a grown-up when you're 37. I'm 39 now—I'm getting used to it."

Ariel Swartley



AARON RAPPAPORT