

Rockin' blueswoman Bonnie Raitt slides into the Schnitz Saturday, October 12



By Michele Coppola | Special to The Oregonian

Ahh, sweet Bonnie.

The independent, bottleneck-blues guitarist with the timeless voice hits the Schnitz in Portland on Oct. 12, and she's a knockout, even in her early 60s.

Don't take my word for it—check out her recent performance on [Jimmy Kimmel's](#) show. The woman positively glows:

The hair's the same uncompromising red, the slide of her fingers over a fretboard effortless, the voice rich like fall colors, intensified by more sugar in the leaf.

You can see for yourself when she plays downtown Portland on Saturday night. The best seats are already gone, but there's really not a bad place to sit when you're listening to Bonnie Raitt.

Long before she stood at a press podium with an armful of Grammys in 1990, Raitt was well respected in blues circles for her seasoned voice, slide guitar skills and unconventional looks. You'd be hard pressed to find many other lauded blues players who are petite Radcliffe-educated women, then or now.

But Raitt has always done the unexpected. She was a recovering alcoholic with nine albums and 20 years of playing under her belt when she finally had her greatest commercial success with “Nick of Time”, the album that won her all those aforementioned awards.

Twenty-two years later, Raitt is still doing exactly what she wants: keeping alive the roots music that inspired her. It’s why her last album, which features her own blend of blues, pop, reggae and rock, was called “Slipstream.” It’s a term that refers to the physical or inspirational current created by the passing of something larger.

"I'm in the slipstream of all these styles of music," Raitt said in press materials for the album. "I'm so inspired and so proud to continue these traditions, whether it's reggae or soul or blues. I'm holding up the traditions of the music that I love."

The 2012 release also scored Raitt her 10th Grammy for best Americana album, beating out favorites [The Lumineers](#) and the [Avett Brothers](#).

Despite all that “musician’s musician” credibility, Raitt’s most popular song ever -- based on iTunes sales, adult contemporary radio airplay and karaoke bar requests -- is still the devastating ballad “I Can’t Make You Love Me”, from 1991’s “Luck of the Draw”.

Raitt told NPR back in 2002 that the song remains one of the most difficult for her to sing.

“I mean, ‘I Can’t Make You Love Me’ is no picnic. I love that song, so does the audience. So it’s almost a sacred moment when you share that, that depth of pain with your audience.”

She usually saves that one for an encore, so go on Saturday night for the full-course rockin’ blues-folk-soul Bonnie entrée -- and stay for the “I Can’t Make You Love Me” dessert.