



When Melissa McClelland started working on her third album, *Thumbelina's One Night Stand*, the local singer-songwriter was determined to stick to one musical style and resist the temptation to experiment with every instrument available to her. But something miraculous happened along the way, and McClelland ended up making an album that ventures all over the musical map, from old-fashioned country and gospel to bluesy and jazzy pop-rock.

"My goal was to make it really consistent and cohesive, and it's the complete opposite of that," said McClelland, laughing, in a recent interview. "It's blues one minute, country the next, pop the next. ... I don't know, I just had fun doing it that way, and I'm OK with it now."

"When we were in the studio, it was fun to play with the songs and see where they could go. I suspect some people might have a hard time jumping between the different styles, but I tried to tie it all together with my vocals and some of the instrumentation."

The album, which comes out today, is held together not just by McClelland's voice but also by a loose narrative about innocence lost in the big city. And in a way, anchoring the album with a story freed her to let loose musically.

"I used to start songs with a guitar part, but now I find that they start from the story, the lyrics," she explained.

"I'll be inspired by an idea, and words will come to me while I'm riding my bike or doing dishes or something. And then I'll pick up a guitar and put it together with a melody. It's strange for me, 'cause it's not how I used to write, and logically doing it the other way seems easier. But lately I'm more inspired by the stories I'm telling. To me, that's what stands out."

McClelland made the record with the help of guests including Sarah McLachlan, Greg Keelor and Justin Rutledge, plus producer Luke Doucet, another eclectic songwriter who's also her fiance.

"It can be a disaster going into the studio with someone you're involved with," she said. "I think everybody had concerns about that."

"But we've worked together so much -- he did my last record, and we started off working professionally, that's how we met -- that I think we felt really confident going in. And we had the same vision for the record. It was great in the studio -- we weren't afraid to say what we thought or anything, it was a creative, fun experience, and I think it worked out really well."

"When I invite someone to play on my record, I expect them to be themselves. I don't want to hire studio musicians to just play the notes right, I want people to have opinions and say what they think should happen on a song. That's what I love about it -- it's a collaboration. It's exciting to put a bunch of talented artists in a room and see what happens."

Melissa McClelland will do just that when she plays a CD release party at the Music Gallery tonight.



Melissa McClelland on her new album: "It's blues one minute, country the next, pop the next. ... I don't know, I just had fun doing it that way, and I'm OK with it now."