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# Come to the Window

**Melissa Etheridge** will serenade crowds in Union and Orono this summer.

INTERVIEW BY SARAH MOORE

**F**ROM THE MOMENT she broke on-to the music scene in 1988, Melissa Etheridge has forged her own destiny. In the past thirty years, the songwriter has recorded 14 studio albums, collected Academy and Grammy awards, overcome breast cancer in 2005, and advocated tirelessly for the LGBTQ community.

You're playing among the vines at Savage Oakes Winery on June 16. What can the audience look forward to? I'll be performing my classics like "Come To My Window," "I'm the Only One," and "Bring Me Water." There's a good handful of songs I know everyone wants to hear, and I love to play. Then I dig a little deeper into my albums. I've played in wineries for the past couple of years now. They're some of the most beautiful places in the world, so I've folded that into my tour schedule, although I'm not really a huge wine drinker. I'm more of an herbal girl.

It's been 30 years since the release of your eponymous debut album. How has the music industry evolved during that time?

When I came into the business in the late 1980s, we'd call around radio stations to try and convince them to play my songs. They'd respond "Thanks, but we already



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have a female artist." It got better in the 1990s. That was a glorious time. There were so many great musicians playing and recording very important music. Of course, after that, I experienced the advent of the digital age. I'm not going to say it's bad—music is still just as important now. I have four kids, and I see how technology allows them to access different artists. It's helped me, too. It allows people to listen to my earlier work, and it's given me more control and reach with my songs. I can interact with my fans directly.

If you could give any advice to yourself back then, what would it be?

Just take it one day at a time—you have lots of time and life to live. Try to love yourself as much as looking for someone else to love you. Do more sit-ups.

*"In the 1980s, we'd call around radio stations to try and convince them to play my songs. They'd respond "Thanks, but we already have a female artist."*

You've always been an outspoken musical figure. Do you think artists have a duty to stand up and speak out? It's a personal choice. You can't say do be political with your music; you can't say don't. For me when I started out, my work was so incredibly personal I was compelled to be honest. I can't imagine being any other way. I have no regrets about speaking out on the issues I have.

Your final show of the national tour is at the Collins Center in Orono on September 29. Do you plan to take a little downtime in Maine?

I love Maine, especially in the summer-time! I usually visit Portland once a year. There's not much time for relaxing with four kids. I'm usually writing and recording and staying busy and creative. Sometimes going out and playing a show is the most relaxing thing I can do. ■



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