



In it for the Drama with Lisa Locke

by Chiemi

"I write to communicate—to express something through song that it didn't even occur to me I could give words to," said Somerville resident and recording artist Lisa Locke. She will be doing just that at the Somerville News Poetry/Music Series @ Toast April 9 3pm.

Locke released her debut CD, "In it For the Drama," at a release party at The Burren in March 2005.

Poignant and haunting, Locke's deep and introspective lyrics leave you thinking about the words long after the songs have finished playing. The music has many minor chords—a beautiful, bitter-sweet compliment to Lisa's clear vocals. All the songs speak volumes while at the same time soothing the ear with the musical notes. Tracks seven through 10 stand out in particular. "Different Tides" has a silky feel, accompanied by piano. "The Man Inside" paints a picture, a scene and a history all at once, and is told in tones of compassion. This is followed by "Waiting by the Door," which contains beautiful space—space to contemplate. Finally, "Waterlilies" concludes the album with Locke's voice blending with the piano. It creates the feeling of being embraced by the sanctity, stillness and peace of pools of unusual and brilliant water.

According to Locke, her songs are influenced by the time she has spent on three continents in a wide variety of conditions. For instance, "The Man Inside" is a character sketch discussing alcoholism and based on a student camping trip where a father brought liquor to at-

tempt to induce students, including his own son, to fall into a drunken stupor with him. Other topics include issues of "relationships and growth—things stressful and scary."

Locke learned to play the guitar, and began writing songs, while teaching English with the Peace Corps in Far Eastern Russia. Many of the songs on her album are a product of her two years spent as the only native English speaker in a town 10,000 miles from home, which gave Locke "a lot of time alone."

Locke relates that her Peace Corps supervisor wanted her to learn an instrument to "accompany students in the student talent show." The supervisor set Locke up with a Soviet guitar instructor and she began taking lessons. The instructor did not speak English. Locke amusingly recalls that her first lesson included him drawing labeled diagrams of the guitar and of a person to convey how to begin fingering chords and strumming.

Locke is a most appropriate feature for the Series, as she started her writing career as a poet. Her lyrics are imbedded with imagery. Her melodies, perhaps Russian-influenced, favor minor keys. Some have said they have a Celtic feel. Of composing, Locke says her pieces "start with words, verse poetry." Then, she "finds the rhythm and the melody in the poetry."

"In It for the Drama" was produced by Sammy James, who also provided piano parts, Sean Dennehy on acoustic guitar, and mastered by Zac Cataldo at NightTrain Studios in Westford. It is available on CD-Baby.com.

