

Champion
poverty fighter
of the world:
Muhammad Yunus

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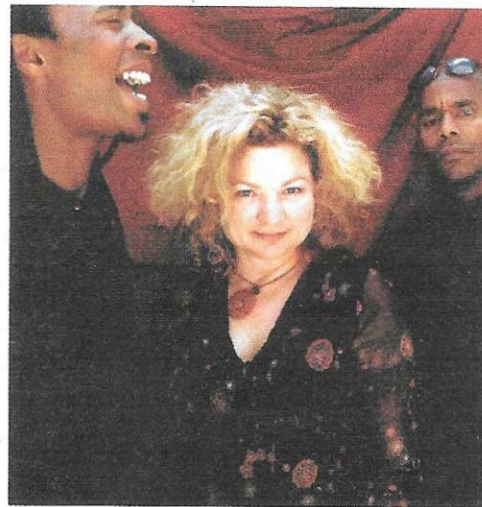
OUTSOURCED JOBS

In love with the sound of wood

The Beth Custer Ensemble: *Respect as a Religion* (BC Records)
Available via www.bethcuster.com and www.cd-baby.com

The American composer and clarinetist Beth Custer blew into my record collection years ago as a member of the ethnic dance group Trance Mission.

I was immediately impressed by her lyrical performance on the bass clarinet. I later discovered that she was also active as an independent performer, complete with her own record label. She almost had a breakthrough with the release of the beautiful CD *Eighty Mile Beach*, on which she performs with bass player and DJ Christian Jones, and when she received ecstatic praise from the British newspaper *The Guardian*. For mysterious reasons, major success didn't materialize. Now she has come out with another great record which



reveals her as not only an amazing instrumentalist but a singer—reason enough for an intercontinental telephone interview.

You play jazz, classical, avant-garde, dance, Latin and rock, and now funk as well. Why so many different styles?

"Simply love for music. Nothing more, nothing less. It's not very practical, by the way, because you don't get anywhere—particularly in the United States—if you can't be classified. Everything is compartmentalized here, from the record bins to the radio stations. My career may look erratic, but in fact all the groups and ensembles in which I play or have played grew out of friendships. You run into someone, it clicks, and then you play together. Club Foot Orchestra was set up for a single performance, and we've been together for 13 years."

Where did your love for the clarinet come from?

"As a child I was fascinated by the sound of wind instruments, especially when played together. Back then, a lot of schools had 'clarinet choirs,' comparable to the mandolin orchestras that used to be popular in Europe. I've been playing piano since I was three and was nine when I started taking clarinet lessons. I like the saxophone, too, but the clarinet is a tougher instrument, and I like the challenge. Plus I fell in love with the sound of wood."

You sang for the first time on record on "Inclement Weather" on *Eighty Mile Beach*. Your performance there was fairly understated, but on *Respect as a Religion* you go all out. A new challenge?

"You could say that. I never saw myself as a singer, although Joni Mitchell was one of my biggest idols. The many positive reactions to "Inclement Weather" gave me the courage to go for it."

TON MAAS

In Beth Custer's CD player

Lhasa: *The Living Road*. "A poetic and poignant record I never get tired of. You should see her live."

Jimmy Smith: *various CDs*. "One of my heroes who was finally supposed to perform here in the area, but unexpectedly passed away just beforehand."

John Cage: *Works for Violin 4*. "As far as I'm concerned, this is the ideal music to cook by—another hobby of mine."

TON MAAS



For **Ton Maas** foraging about in the musical undercurrents is a full-time occupation. When he's not working on his successful Dutch radio programme he takes time to write for *Ode* magazine about brilliant musicians who tend to fall all too easily by the wayside of "mainstream" music.