



# Spotlight on Jen Porter

ARTICLE BY ASHLEY HAMILTON

Like any good musician, Jen Porter knows heartache. Shortly after completing her first album in 1999, she sent a copy of it to Sally Taylor—daughter of James Taylor and Carly Simon, as well as a successful musician in her own right. Not knowing what to expect, **PORTER HOPED TO RECEIVE SOME GOOD FEEDBACK AND, WITH ANY LUCK, SOME GOOD CONNECTIONS. SHE GOT BOTH.**

Taylor replied with an admiring e-mail, applauding her CD and asking if there was anything she could do to help. Being up-and-coming and ambitious, Porter asked for a gig, and Taylor got her one.

“She’s telling me she’s going to have her record company there, her publicity company...and I’m all excited,” recalls Porter. “I talk to the owner of the bar that I’m going to be playing at, and I ask them to rent me a piano—I didn’t play guitar at the time. And I think it’s all set up.”

Unfortunately, she thought wrong. Meeting Sally Taylor at the bar for her big gig, everyone was asking Porter why she didn’t bring a guitar; Porter was asking them why they didn’t rent her a piano. There was no guitar, no piano...and no gig.

“All I could think in my mind was, ‘I’m blowing it,’” says Porter. “I had been given this opportunity by the daughter of James Taylor and Carly Simon and I was blowing it! That’s all there is to that story. I didn’t get to play, and we ended up leaving.”

But just like any good artist knows heartache, they also know the taste of success. A few years and two more albums later, Porter is wiser and more experienced. For starters, she knows how to play the guitar, and she always gets agreements (e.g., renting a piano) in writing. But more importantly, she has learned how to make it as a working musician.

Often compared to artists such as Sheryl Crow and Stevie Nicks, Porter is wowing audiences across the Midwest with her deep lyrics and soulful voice. She has hopes of taking her act to the east and west, but for now she’s happy being rooted in Chicago—singing at some of the city’s hottest venues, including the Hard Rock Cafe and House of Blues. She also frequents several of Chicago’s lesser-known haunts, showing off her talents at places like Gentry of Chicago and Lonie Walker’s Underground Wonder Bar.

However, Porter’s life isn’t all pleasure and no business. When she’s not playing gigs, she’s booking gigs (Porter is her own booker, manager and publicist), and headlining a wedding band called Mazel Tov Cocktail.

**“I DON’T EVER WANT TO FEEL RESENTFUL OF THIS JOB—BECAUSE IT IS A JOB AND IT IS A LOT OF WORK,” SAYS PORTER, “BUT IT’S ALSO MY LOVE, MY HEART AND MY PASSION...SO I WANT TO MAKE SURE I ALWAYS LOVE WHAT I’M DOING.”**

Part of that comes from singing her kind of music. While Porter writes and performs her own songs, she has also become a pro at singing other people’s tunes—covering everything from Fiona Apple and Carol King to Queen, Led Zeppelin and Pink Floyd.

“For me, the end-all, be-all has never been about being famous. I don’t really care about that,” Porter says. “I guess I can only hope that some more things will happen for me—if I continue to work hard and put my heart, soul, life and love into this music...and people continue to buy the albums and get things out of them, then good things will come. They always will.”

