



ARTHUR GODFREY EXPANDS THE PROSCENIUM

BY MARK WEHNER

We all know the drill. Write some great songs, get them recorded, release a CD, and then... Well, that last part can get a bit sketchy. For most of us, it would be something akin to "lather, rinse, repeat." But singer-songwriter Arthur Godfrey has a different idea—one that could reshape how you might choose to present music, as well as affording the public a new avenue for receiving it.

Growing up on the east side of Boston was far from idyllic for Godfrey. It included fear, heartache, and sexual abuse—hardly the experiences for writing bouncy little ditties. Still, those experiences have provided the underlying themes for many of his award-winning songs, as well as the motivation for his latest project, *If I Only Knew Your Name*—a multimedia event incorporating Godfrey's music with a scripted stage presentation.

"I didn't want to write another CD," says Godfrey. "I did five of them. I have one in my pocket. I say to myself, 'What's the point of putting it out?' I want to do something that brings what I do to the stage. People will still get a concert, but they'll also have it acted out in a very simple context."

For the multimedia production, 13 songs were culled from Godfrey's *East Side Of Town* and *If I Only Knew Your Name* CDs. The songs make up a chronological journey through a tortured childhood, drugs and prison, a dysfunctional relationship with a hooker, and, finally, to a day when the ghosts can be laid to rest.

"It's a story about people overcoming the negative side of their

past and making it through," he explains. "Every song I write, I envision as a small play, and I hope that you don't have to listen multiple times to get the feeling, texture, or subject matter."

While the songs are all Godfrey's, the accompanying script was co-written with Dallas playwright Edward Pittman. Godfrey's friendship with Oscar winning actor Sean Penn also proved invaluable.

"Having the chance to be on a few of his sets, and seeing how a movie is made up close, I became fascinated, and I got familiar with the whole process," says Godfrey. "It enhanced the idea of getting my play a little further along."

Godfrey and Pittman believe there are small theaters across the country that will welcome the show. A ten-minute trailer will be available soon to aid the presentation, and the show could be hitting the road sometime in 2007. The ability to draw from both music listeners and theater fans would certainly broaden Godfrey's reach, and he's visibly excited about the prospect.

"I believe the public is ready for this," he says. "I think they want something more than just another CD—I know I do. I simply couldn't get interested in producing another audio CD. I mean, writing music is stimulating, but putting it in play form is blowing my mind. It's not like, 'What are you doing?' It's more like, 'What took you so long to get here?' Now it's time to shut my eyes and dream." ●