

# RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL

## Love, Curtis play incredible solstice concert

By Jennifer Kuykendall

RENO GAZETTE-JOURNAL

6/24/2002 09:08 pm

My guess is that the unexpected afternoon rain was one reason for the two-thirds full amphitheater on Friday night for the combined Laura Love Duo/Catie Curtis show, but those who took a chance under cloudy skies certainly got their money's worth. I usually feel silly effusing over a show like I'm about to do, but this concert was, in a word, incredible. The threatening weather and intimate venue gave the feeling of friends talking and strumming around a bonfire, except your friends never sounded this good. My only complaint about the show was an audible buzz from an amplifier, which was just irritating at first but became more of a nuisance after Curtis started playing.

Love started the show, playing her signature bass, with guitarist Jen Todd and mandolin player Jimmy Ryan. I saw the Laura Love band play about four years ago, and I'm happy to see that she seems much more at ease with performing, but does so with no less passion. Watching Love enjoy the music she was playing, and hearing from Todd and Ryan was half the show.

Love and Todd exchanged stories and laughs with the audience, telling the stories behind Love's usually politically-motivated lyrics. "Sometimes Davy Wins," for instance, is about a piece of land in Eureka, Calif., that Wal-Mart wanted, but the citizens pushed for a park instead. Although Love reveals in the song that she doesn't read the Bible, she likens the residents of the town taking on the big corporation to the story of David and Goliath.

"Amazing Grace" always stops me in my tracks when I hear it on Love's "Octoroon" CD, but the live version of the traditional song took my breath completely away, and I wasn't the only one with tears coming to my eyes, either. Love's voice is truly amazing, and Todd's, slightly deeper and leaning to raspy, was the perfect compliment. Toward the end of Love's set, Curtis joined in on drums. I had never seen or heard Curtis before, but I was heartened at her drum playing, which was great. I couldn't help singing along with "I'm A Givin' Way," a particularly strong song from the early CD "Pangaea." Todd proved on this song that she also could take the lead, and Love switched smoothly to back-up vocals.

During intermission, Love sat at a table selling CDs, talking with audience members and posing for photos with young fans. The line never seemed to end as Love spent time talking to each person sharing their "you won't remember but..." stories with her. To her credit, Love did try to remember.

By the time Curtis started to play, the clouds had dissipated, revealing a waxing moon and bright stars. She even had the crickets taking cues in the quieter moments. Curtis' music was mellower than Love's, but no less passionate. I find that very few people can sing the sort of simple, uplifting lyrics Curtis writes without being perky or irritating. Curtis talked a little bit about the problems with labeling her music, but I have a collection of the genre she fits in. This music is the soundtrack of sunny Sunday afternoons when you have the rare opportunity to be doing exactly what you want. I know the genre name is a little long — I'm working on that. Curtis' music just makes you feel good. Many of the lyrics involve the sort of wordplay and little jokes that you feel silly smiling about, but they make you smile nonetheless.

Ryan's mandolin went as well with Curtis' guitar as it did with Love and Todd. Curtis also gave Ryan a chance to play a track from his new solo album. The blues-rock was a little jarring after the easy groove of Curtis' music, but the harder sounds he could pull from the mandolin were amazing.

Whether singing about falling in love or watching grass grow, Curtis captures each subject with easy lyrics that never seemed forced. And she knows the answer to the mystery that has haunted us all: Whatever happened to Tammy Faye Baker?



**Liz Margerum/Liz Margerum**  
**LAURA LOVE:** The singer performs on stage with Jimmy Ryan at the Hawkins Amphitheater at Bartley Ranch Regional Park Friday.

Copyright © 2002 The Reno Gazette-Journal