

The lady sings the blues

Performing at TCAN tonight, Joan Osbourne reinvents American classics

Singer Joan Osbourne will be bringing the blues with her to The Center for Arts in Natick on March 28, as she introduces her seventh album, "Bring It On Home."

This latest record reinvents older blues and soul recordings by some of the greats - Muddy Waters, Tina Turner and Sonny Boy Williamson, to name a few.

"The blues is such a huge part of American musical tradition. It's still really vibrant and relevant today," says Osbourne, who's still best known for 1995's "One of Us." "I just felt like it was the time for me to do it and I had the opportunity to do it."

Re-creating classics that are central to both the American musical and historical narrative is risky business, but Osbourne manages to alter these songs in a way that adds new dimensions to the beloved blues.

"When you're taking material like this that has been done by some of your heroes, you don't want to just imitate them," Osbourne says. "You have to find your own way into their songs. I try to find



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out where my voice and the song intersect to create something that hasn't happened before."

Osbourne uses her rich, soulful and sometimes sultry voice to shape these influential recordings into something entirely new and entirely hers.

"For example, the Muddy Waters tune 'No One You Love,' Osbourne explains, "there's a way that he delivers that song that is very commanding and very masculine, so I felt like a possible way for me to give it a new twist was to make it more seductive

and feminine. I feel like we were able to find something new that was still respectful of the song but wasn't just slavishly imitating what had already happened."

Osbourne admits, however, that her unique vocal talent wasn't something that came to her overnight, but took years to develop. She put this project on hold until a day when she was sure that she could give these songs the robustness she was after.

"[The blues] was music I always had a great love for," she says, "but when

I was first starting out I didn't feel like I had the kind of richness or texture in my voice that I would have liked to have. Now that I've been doing this for 20-something years I feel like my voice has developed and gotten richer."

The dedication Osbourne has brought to her craft and to the world of music has not gone unrecognized. "Bring It On Home" was nominated for a 2013 Grammy for Best Blues Album, and Osbourne says that means more to her than all the other nominations she's garnered.

"This latest nomination was really gratifying because I've been doing this for a number of years now. It's one thing to get nominations when you're brand new and everybody's paying attention, but it's another thing to have been doing this for a long career and still be recognized by the academy."

Part of her pride in this album comes from the amount of creative input she and her band had in all aspects of the process.

"It really felt good for a record that I was able to coproduce," Osbourne says. "It was just a labor of love



Joan Osbourne performs at The Center for Arts in Natick tonight.

from all of us. It was gratifying to get the nomination for this project because of all of the individuals I worked with."

Still, after a long career full of achievements, Osbourne remains humble and effervescent. In keeping with the values of the blues, she says she recognizes she is not isolated from other musicians and listeners, but rather is a part of a continuous human experience.

"I do still enjoy that moment of getting on stage with musicians and with the audience and being apart of this great group experience," she says. "When I'm standing up there, I really don't feel

like it's about me and everyone's looking at me. I feel like we're all here experiencing this music together and I'm just doing my part like everyone else is doing their part."

Osbourne is simply awed by the suggestion of becoming part of the ever-important blues tradition. "I could only really hope that that's what's happening," she says. "I think that's for other people to decide."

Joan Osbourne

WHEN: Thursday, March 28
WHERE: The Center for Arts in Natick, 14 Summer St.
INFO: 508-647-0097, www.natickartarts.org