

## CRITIC'S CHOICE



### A DAUGHTER'S TURN

*Former Santa Rosan Emily Kurn sings in honor of her mom*

Singer-songwriter Emily Kurn is not afraid of tackling the social and political issues of the modern world. "It's interesting to take a relevant topic and make someone think. I like to say something in a song," says Kurn about her songwriting style. After watching *Don't Look Back*, a documentary on Bob Dylan, Kurn was inspired by the way that singers in the '60s wrote about social justice and current political situations. In response, she penned "If I Am American," a rousing yet delicate tune about the contradictions of living in a country that "doesn't act in ways that I approve." The steadily touring singer performs this and other songs from her new album at the New College of California on June 29.

With influences ranging from Joni Mitchell to Jackson Browne, Kurn is truly inspired by the lesser-known musicians who are her compatriots in the contemporary folk/Americana scene. A recent finalist at the Kerrville New Folk Festival and winner in the 2007 Woody Guthrie Songwriting Contest, Kurn is no stranger to the politically and emotionally charged folk music that continues to thrive on the American musical landscape.

Kurn attended high school in Santa Rosa and now lives in Alaska, though much of her time is spent on the road in support of her new album, *Things Change*. Kurn's mother, Michele, lived in Santa Rosa until her death from cancer in 2001, and the show at the New College is billed as the "Michele Kurn Memorial Concert." All proceeds from the show will benefit the Earl Baum Center for the Blind, a nonprofit regional community center established in 1999 where Michele worked. Her daughter sees this concert as a way to pay tribute to her mother's work while contributing to a vital community organization in her hometown.

"My music is about change—relationships, death, my perspective of things," Kurn says. "It represents a period of time when I moved from California to Alaska. So much has changed since my mom was here."

Emily Kurn plays the New College of California on Friday, June 29. 99 Sixth St., Santa Rosa. 8pm. \$15. 707.568.0112.

*Leilani Clark*