

TRÉSOR ENTERRÉ

Extreme talent

Canadian Colleen Rennison, with her blues-soul voice, is a unique artist in the music business.

By BERTRAND DEVEAUD



Especially since she has an exceptional voice. She put together a group with some college friends. "It was a girl band, The Extremes, a tribute to Dianna Ross & The Supremes, also because of my personality." When she was 20, her parents sent her to New York to study at Circle in the Square, a famous theater school on Broadway. "I hated it. The atmosphere, the courses, everything... They said I had

played covers, by Nina Simone and Led Zeppelin. It was fun." Colleen doesn't just have a voice, she has a presence. But her demons are never far away. She gets into alcohol. "A big problem for me, which made me do things I regret..."

She began to write songs and, in 2011, she created No Sinner (Rennison spelled backwards), a band that mixes rock, soul and blues. Their first album (Mascot-Provogue), Boo Hoo Hoo, , was well received. On stage, she has established herself as a performer. At the same time, she recorded a solo album, See the Sky About to Rain (Black Hen, 2014). "A tribute to the music that I grew up with." Covers of Bobbie Gentry, Rita Coolidge and Joni Mitchell. In 2016, No Sinner releases a second album, Old Habits Die Hard. But tour fatigue, conflicts within the group, and tensions with the label precipitate band's breakup. In recent years, Colleen has gotten on her motorbike and hit the road. She lived in Austin, then Mexico. "I had written several very personal songs. I dreamed of making an album, but people must have found me a bit unstable." Back in Vancouver, she performed with a trendy punk hard-rock band, GrrlCircus. She reunited with an old friend, Stephen Jeffery, a businessman and fellow musician. "He had the money, and said to me: 'Go ahead, make the album of your dreams. Put in your emotions, your vision, everything you have in you.'" Recorded in Vancouver between 2021 and 2022, the album, including the recently completed mix, contains nine songs. The author has listened to them. They are overwhelming, timeless, and most of them already sound like classics. And Colleen has never sung so well.

Child star

Between 1995 and 2013, Colleen Rennison appeared in thirteen films, ten or so TV movies, and numerous television series. Her first role was at age 6, in the Canadian movie Max (1994). She made her mark in the series Highlander, Poltergeist, Millennium and Stargate SG-1. In film, she appeared with Linda Fiorentino and Ray Liotta in Unforgettable (1996) by John Dahl, and she stood out alongside Bruce Willis and Michelle Pfeiffer in The Story of Us (1999), by Rob Reiner. In 2001, her performance in A Feeling Called Glory won her the Gemini Prize (from the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television) for "Best Actress in a leading role". She was only 13 years old.

She talks about it openly, without false modesty. Like a need to reveal herself, to delve deeply into her childhood. "There's always been something different about me, explains Colleen Rennison. As a child, I had behaviour problems. I was extreme, going from one emotion to another. I was a strange animal, impossible to tame. My parents didn't know what to do with me."

Early on, she was dosed with medication meant to

regulate her hyperactivity or calm her down. Without much effect. When she was 5 years old, her mother heard about a therapy: theatre courses adapted for problem children. "I loved it. I was gifted as it turns out. People said I was original." These courses helped her. Soon, she was going to castings and landing her first roles, "not the good girl, all cute and well-behaved. I was the mean girl, the tormented kid. It was great".

Colleen, born in December 1987 in Vancouver, spent the early years of her life either on film sets or in school. Music is her other passion. She loves Etta James, Nina Simone, Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin. "Artists that young people my age weren't listening to. Troubled women who had incredible talent. They had a huge influence on me." Colleen continued to act, but got more and more involved in singing.

too deep a voice for female roles." Her voice is her greatest strength. Deep, sensual and raspy, rising up to Heaven and back down to hell. An incredibly musical voice that makes you feel joy and suffering. "Singing was vital for me. It allowed me to express what I was feeling deep down inside me".

Back in Vancouver, Colleen devoted herself to music. She joined a band, Little Sister and the Time Machine, who toured clubs and small venues. "We