

Amos brings a gang of 'Strange Little Girls' to solo tour

By Tamara Dunn
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Beware of a show that calls itself "strange." This is the label of Tori Amos' "Strange Little Tour" as she made a stop at Ovens Auditorium in Charlotte Oct. 4. The concert was not only a homecoming for the North Carolina native, but it marked her first solo tour in seven years. But was she really performing solo?

The tour is promoting Amos' latest album, *Strange Little Girls*, a compilation of covers originally performed by male singers. Instead of producing a karaoke style album, Amos applies her own twist to the songs, giving the lyrics' female characters a voice. Also, Amos dressed the part of each character in her songs for the cover art and liner notes.

With the premise of the new album's message and the lack of a band providing additional sounds, the show began with a slashed black cloth in the background and an enlarged photograph of one of Amos' characters. The speakers blared "97 Bonnie & Clyde," Amos' rendition of Eminem's con-

traversal rap about explaining to his daughter why he has killed his wife. Backstage, Amos provided the vocals to the soundtrack while the audience was subdued by the visuals on stage and the song. The ironic combination of a dazzling light display with a chilling description of murder gave an intense feel that would linger throughout Amos' two-hour set.

The cloth dropped and revealed Amos' instruments: on center-stage, her trusty piano within a "full-body turn" range of a Rhodes keyboard and a Wultizer on the farthest left end of the stage. To her right, a single table draped with black tablecloth displayed three of Amos' new personas. The piano-Rhodes combination was used to its fullest potential as Amos performed "Little Amsterdam," a song she rarely performs live. Between verses, Amos switched from the piano to the Rhodes in a single whoosh, making gun-trotting moves like a cowgirl as she did so. Her self-choreographed gestures added joviality to a song that not many audience members recognized. This playfulness was also carried into widely known songs

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on the setlist such as "Leather" and "Past the Mission." Her forgetfulness was comical yet forgivable as she repeated some of the same verses in "Concertina" and had to restart "1000 Oceans."

Like her characters in *Strange Little Girls*, some of the songs were cleverly disguised. One that led to a sudden shift in the atmosphere was "Glory of the 80s." In studio form, the song is heavily laced with percussion and synthesizers, and the thought of how it would sound with only a piano was unimaginable. Amos started to play the opening of "Precious Things," and the audience strongly reacted

with adoration. Without warning, the music changed, providing an uneasy feeling but a satisfying turnaround for a heavily engineered song.

Other standouts in the set were a cover of Tom Wait's "Time" and "Cool on Your Island." These subdued the audience, as both songs were mostly unknown. "Time" highlighted Amos' whispering voice as she politely played her piano, and the lighting effects on stage echoed her resonance. The ballad was beautiful although it was not her own, but she took possession over it as she performed. "Cool on Your Island" was another rare treat as the song dates back to her '80s wannabe pop queen era with the band Y Kant Tori Read. Playing the song exclusively on the Rhodes gave the song that one-hit wonder feel, yet it didn't seem almost two decades old.

Amos' attachment to North Carolina was prevalent throughout the concert. She told a tale of how her one-year-old daughter, Natashya, knew they had reached the border when she woke up with delight. Amos also broke

into an improtu version of James Taylor's "Carolina on My Mind" on the Wultizer before starting a new version of "Crucify." Even her parents attended the concert, making it like a family reunion.

However, nothing was as strong or moving as her performance of "Me and the Gun." With only a harsh white spotlight directly on her face and no instruments to play, Amos softly told her tragic tale. At first, hearing the song excited the crowd, but a hush slowly filled the auditorium. The performance was like watching a private confessional with a large glass window exposing the person inside. The chilling effect reached its climax as she muttered "Have you been to Carolina where the biscuits taste so sweet?" Another dose of ironic juxtaposition in the set paired "Me and the Gun" with her cover of "Over the Rainbow," another song disguised with an introduction from "Twinkle."



Courtesy of Atlantic Records
Tori Amos, disguised as one of the characters in *Strange Little Girls*, is currently on her first solo tour in seven years.

form a solo act. She combined her strange characters and instruments to perform 20 songs by different personas. They toyed with the audience's heads away from the expected drove them past what they knew.

THE PLACES YOU'LL GO: 'SEXPLORATION' ON CAMPUS

Venture out of the dorm room to discover the various campus hot spots for hooking up.

Back when we were freshmen, back when getting your swerve on was still uncharted territory, back when the walk of shame from Bostwick Residence Hall to Collins Residence Hall wasn't taboo, those were the days when hooking up in your dorm room was still fun and exciting.

Don't get me wrong, hooking up in your room is still something to look forward to, but after a while the illicit nature of the hookup begins to decline and the raging fire of passion eventually dwindles to a mere spark.

How do you rekindle that burning flame

of desire? How do you get back to the days when hooking up was new and different?

Take the university's very own Sexploration Tour.

All right, so there is no Sexploration Tour. But if there were, it would definitely include:

Z. Smith Reynolds Library: Take a tip from Ludacris' "What's Your Fantasy?" and get it on "in the library on top of books, but you can't be too loud." While the 24-hour study rooms are a bit conspicuous - unless, of course, you're into exhibitionism - the basement of the Wilson Wing is a viable option. True, the lighting is not necessarily ideal, but it is secluded, and you would be surrounded by the words of the greatest minds in his-

tory while pleasuring your partner. Never underestimate the power of intellectual stimulation.

Benson University Center: One of my girlfriends once told me a rather unusual

sex and the campus by brandy jones

story. One Friday night, she was walking through Benson and suddenly heard kissing noises and quiet moaning. The moral of her story? The couches on the third floor of Benson comfortably fit two.

Tribble Hall Elevators: Tribble contains a wealth of private and not-so-private hideouts for sexplorers. With so many options, where do you roam once you've entered the building? There are always the couches in the lobby, but that's just cliché. Why not try the ancient elevators in Tribble? Ever since Aerosmith's *Pump* was released in 1989, people all over the world have been wondering about "Love in an Elevator." Why not test it out on elevators that apparently have the ability to stop?

Classrooms: Have you ever thought about walking into class the Monday after a great weekend and saying to yourself, "Ha! I hooked up on my teacher's desk on Friday!" There's something risky and slightly dirty about hooking up

in one of your classrooms. You visit the room day in and day out and all you can really concentrate on is how you've been naked on Professor Jones' desk. Makes paying attention in class a little bit more difficult, doesn't it?

Whatever stops you plan on making during your own personalized Sexploration tour, always remember to scope out the surroundings before you get down to business. I can't imagine it would be very pleasant to get busted by a maintenance man in a Tribble elevator, unless of course you dig men in uniform.

"Sex and the Campus" is a regular column exploring the social and sexual climate at the university. The column is written by a junior under a pseudonym in order to maintain her sexual anonymity.

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