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## Music to Her Ears

By Cathy Dausman



Laura Zucker Photo Cathy Dausman

Earning the West Coast Songwriters' Association award for Best Song of the Year (Berkeley chapter) for "A Thousand Kisses Shy" must be music to Laura Zucker's ears. This is Zucker's fourth local win in six years; she has also earned recognition at best song playoffs in 2007, 2009, and 2010.

Zucker was a Kerrville, Texas New Folk finalist twice and a finalist in the Mountain Stage New Song contest, and the Public Domain Foundation's Music to Life contest. The Lafayette resident and mother of three co-manages a WCSA Lafayette chapter with Laura Whitmore, while working at Lamorinda Music, teaching guitar, vocals, piano and songwriting. Due to conflict of interest she does not compete in Lafayette.

Zucker came late to songwriting, and indeed, even to the west coast. "I'm from New Jersey, and lived there most of my life, attended college and law school (both times at Rutgers University), practiced law, had my three kids there and became a stay-at-home parent," Zucker said. "I only really started writing in earnest in 2005, right after I moved to California," she said.

She has taught at Lamorinda Music since the day it opened. "The owners, (John and Colleen McCormick) and I had kids in the Acalanes Jazz Ensemble," Zucker said.

When Colleen McCormick told Zucker they were leasing space for the store, she offered to review the lease. McCormick then asked if Zucker wanted to teach. "It was the right thing at the right time, allowing me the flexibility to be available to my kids," Zucker said.

So how does a former litigator switch to becoming a singer/songwriter? Zucker explained both songwriting and writing legal briefs "can be reduced to a series of facts presented as a story told with emotion, and designed to appeal to a specific audience."

Zucker feels she's grown professionally since her first award. "I love, love, love performing," Zucker said, but although there has "never been a better time for musicians to get their music out," she realistically admits that it is the "worst time for musicians to get paid."

The best-case scenario, Zucker said "would be for me to sell some songs to other performers, or have songs placed in TV, film or other media."

Zucker's songs run the gamut from folk to blues, Latin, pop and jazz. She calls her style "eclectic acoustic," or "James Taylor meets Cole Porter, and asks Etta James and [Antonio Carlos] Jobim ('The Girl from Ipanema') to sit in." Meanwhile, the singer/songwriter is content with her more modest income because she does what she loves.

"I have no choice," she said with a smile.

Zucker and Best Song winners from other chapters perform at Berkeley's Freight and Salvage Aug. 23. To see Zucker perform "A Thousand Kisses Shy," visit <http://www.westcoastsongwriters.org/chapters/berkeley/best-songs/a-thousand-kisses-shy>.

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