

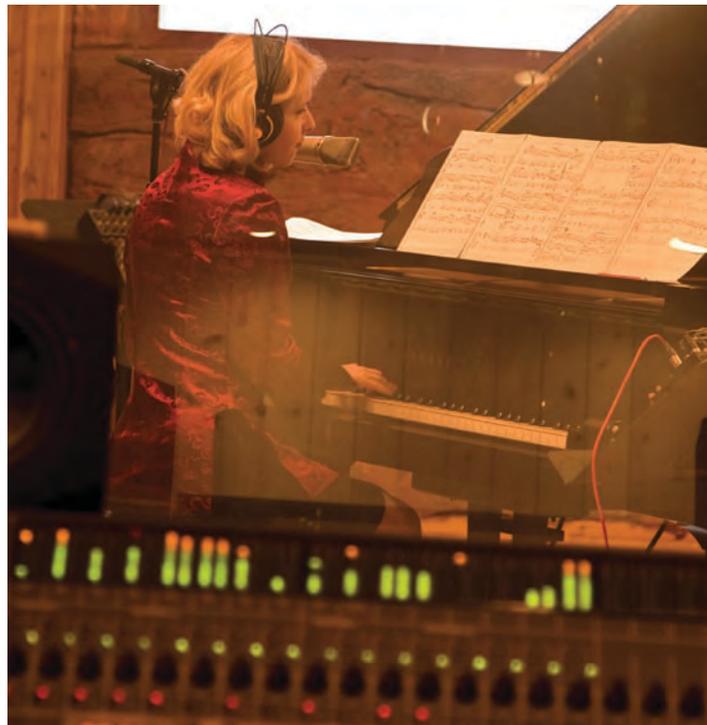




21st Century Renaissance Woman

Nellie McKay talks all about songwriting, arranging, recording, producing, performing, buying records, and . . . riding the bus.

Story by **Ken Richardson**



She is the very model of a modern major . . . model? So it might appear from some of her publicity stills. But Nellie McKay, 28, is in fact a singer, and after a week of following her from the heart of Broadway to what seems like the middle of nowhere in the Delaware Water

Gap, I fully understand that — despite how thoroughly modern Nellie may be — she's also a throwback to another time.

For, in that week, McKay will sing four standards at New York City's Town Hall, play three of her own new pop songs live on WNYC-FM's *Soundcheck*, and perform two full sets at the jazz club of the Deer Head Inn, nestled at the edge of Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains.

Who does that anymore?

And in between those appearances, she will somehow find the time to sit down with me for an interview during a long and lazy din-

ner that will ultimately last more than 2 hours.

Who does *that* anymore?

Well, McKay does all of that, and more. In a time when singers farm out songs to teams of writers and producers, concentrating instead on catering to the American idolatry of those

who over-sing, McKay writes, arranges, and produces nearly all of her own material. Her latest batch can be heard on the swell *Home Sweet Mobile Home* (Verve Forecast), full of everything from jazz to reggae, from rock-ish pop to ethereal balladry, which she leads on piano, ukulele, and a host of other instruments. And she sings it in an understated, melodious, and often bell-clear voice — one of the reasons why *Rolling Stone's* Anthony DeCurtis chose her as his entry in "The Game Changers," a recent *Sky* magazine article that also recognized the likes of film director James Cameron and Supreme Court

