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JODY IN DISGUISE (WITH CLASSICS)



Hardest Working Woman in Shore Business: Jody Joseph is pictured as Janis Joplin and as Stevie Nicks, two singers to whom she pays homage in her May 30 show, ONE LEGEND, ONE DIVA, ONE WOMAN.

By **TOM CHESEK**

First, we dispense with the elephant in the living room. She's **Jon Bon Jovi**'s cousin! And, not only that, she's a cousin of the late great **Mario Lanza**! And both of those guys recorded songs named "Silent Night!"

That said, what **Jody Joseph** really is, to the core of faithful fans who follow her and her band from one local watering hole to the next, is The Hardest Working Woman in Shore Business — a performer who navigates that regional bar circuit with a dexterity that's light years beyond superstars who merely romanticize "the road."

A typical set by **The Jody Joseph Band** — formerly **The Average Joes** until it finally dawned on them just how above-average a band they were — mixes originals from the agile group of veteran players with an iPod's worth of cover material that ranges from tailor-made to her talents (Led Zep, Melissa Etheridge) to some party-favor surprises (KC and the Sunshine Band, Chaka Khan), plus Stones, Dead, Queen, and everything this side of the karaoke machine.

If there is one color that really stands out in Jody Joseph's Amazing Dreamcoat, that'd be **Janis Joplin**, the Texas tornado who so briefly and decisively tore across the musical landscape of the late 1960s, teaching that peace-and-love generation the meaning of the blues. If you had to name another, that'd be **Stevie Nicks**, the California curiosity-shop coquette whose elf-queen persona has cast an arcane and eldritch spell over the years — turning the wasteland of mainstream music into a lush forest (and scattering small woodland creatures before her formidable boots).

This Saturday night, May 30, Jody Joseph leaves the dart-league bar circuit behind for what's almost certainly the most ambitious concert she's ever done — her custom-crafted show *One Legend, One Diva, One Woman*, which takes the stage of the **Paramount Theatre** in Asbury Park after months of planning and perfecting.

Presented in three “acts,” *ILIDIW* spotlights Joseph as Joplin, as Nicks — and as herself, in a wrap-up that we're willing to wager shows how the other two singers make their presences felt in her own original songs. The boys in the band (**Steve Anderson, Jon Rotman, Billy Siegel, Jon “Huey” Tatlow** and **B Jay Willis**) will be there as well, and tickets for the 8pm show (\$22 and \$53) can be reserved online right [here](#).

Red Bank oRBit rang up Jody Joseph at home, where she asked us to ask her what she was doing — making meatballs, it turns out (“it's my Mom's recipe, but I make them better than her”). **Continue Reading** to find out what Janis and Stevie have in common — and what Jody's cousin had to say about her greatest fear.



Joseph and her amazing dreamcoat, surrounded by her band in back of where she'll be appearing Saturday night in her big show. (Photo by John Cavanaugh)

RED BANK ORBIT: I know that you played the Paramount when you moved your Christmas show there last year, but apart from that, would you say that this has got to be by far the most ambitious project you've ever taken on?

JODY JOSEPH: This is the most insane thing I've ever tried to pull off — I kind of outdid myself with reinventing things. I've done Janis songs and Stevie songs for years but never seriously thought of doing a whole show around either one. If you asked me about what I find similar between the two, I would say absolutely nothing! Nothing in common.

How did the show come about? Did you approach Madison Marquette or Live Nation with this idea, or did somebody kind of suggest it to you?

I did have the opportunity to play with **Big Brother** a couple of years ago, and afterward I talked to a woman named **Renee Ludwig** about doing a whole Janis show — she said why don't you think about doing Janis and Stevie in the same show? And now she's the creative coordinator for this whole production.

But I didn't want to spend a whole night being other people — I prefer to be able to come out as myself at some point, so that's the way we have it set up. I come out as Janis, I come out as Stevie, and I come out as me for the last part of the show. For the first two parts of the show I'm not speaking at all between songs — I don't want to fall out of character.

So who's backing you up here? Is it your regular band, plus guest performers?

I'm playing with my regular band, with some additional people — percussionists, backup singers, dancers, from the Philadelphia School of Performing Arts. Plus I'm working with a makeup artist, hairdresser, costume designer, set design — it's just amazing as far as the number of people it takes for this to come together.

And has Live Nation or another outside producer picked up some of the cost of all these extra helpers?

Oh no! It's me! Now Live Nation has partnered with me, in that they're working on 100 percent of the ticket sales; they've moved about 700 thus far. They're taking care of the production costs of the house. They helped with providing the rehearsal space — it's fair to say that for a local artist, they've done more than they would normally do. Basically they said, we'll give you this opportunity.

But I've taken on a lot of the promotion; I called the APP, I went on **WBJB**, and you've seen the posters we have up all over the place.

Given that you're still working the local clubs in between whatever rehearsal time you've allowed yourself, what's been the greatest logistical challenge for you in putting the show together? Is it trying to stomp around the stage in those 16-inch Stevie Nicks boots?

I haven't worked with the steps yet! I'm gonna be using the steps there at the Paramount, but when I'm wearing the Stevie boots — you know how she does the spinning thing onstage — my biggest fear is that I'll spin right off the edge of the stage and land in the VIP seats!

I told my cousin about this and he said, "That's when you become the fourth character — **Lucille Ball!**"

It's certainly a lot of work for a one-shot show. But surely you have some hopes and dreams for this project — do you see it working as a touring attraction, or do you think it would play in Atlantic City?

I think it could go that way. **Eliot Weisman**, who's worked as a manager for **Don Rickles** and **Engelbert Humperdinck**, he worked in the past with **Frank Sinatra** and **Liza Minnelli** also, told he that loves this idea. He thinks it could play outside the area I normally work in. We're going to be videotaping the show, doing a professional video, to use as a promo for the concept. Hopefully it'll be picked up; I'd love for it to be another *Love, Janis*.

Well, I'm amazed that you're still out there several nights a week, playing little up-close gigs at places like The Claddagh and The Docksides, while you're trying to assemble this big, theater-scale sort of presentation.

Yeah, but those are all little drops in the bucket, that fill it up along the way. And when we do all those gigs, we're rehearsing while we're playing; working on the songs that we'll be performing at the Paramount.

So how best to sum up this concert? Is it kind of about you and the influences that shaped you as a performer, rather than a "Legends"-style tribute show?

The best way to describe it is, first of all, I don't go to concerts myself — hardly ever. But I would go to this thing! Second — well, I don't even need to go into the second reason. Just see it!