

Beck's mountain music isn't just country

Performer develops a local following

By **Larry Hanson**
Staff Writer

The majestic splendor of America's mountainous western states spawned some music that has developed a following here in the Mukwonago area.

Brookfield native Tracy Beck has become a regular performer at Kona Cafe and Heaven City restaurants here and seems to have developed a serious following for her music, which spans many genres.

Described by her manager and percussionist Darnell Ellis as a musical chameleon, the singer-songwriter has a catalog that can support shows of up to three hours long.

"My manager came up with that term," the musical chameleon said. "I think he meant I'm very eclectic. You can't categorize me into one vein. I have some music that is John Denver and some of my music sounds country."

She also lists folk, smooth jazz and blues as genres that her music, which is accompanied by guitar and a harmonica, has touched upon.

The music bug hit Beck at a young age, but often lay dormant for stretches.

Having composed music now for almost a decade and seriously performing for the last five years, Beck got her start when she was in a grade school chorus and played the saxophone from the fourth through ninth grades.

At the age of 21, Beck set off for an adventure in the mountains, skiing and backpacking and assembling a series of life experiences that would eventually be immortalized in her music.

"I was pretty young at the time, so I was a traveler, an adventurer," Beck said.



Tracy Beck

She was out west for eight years, returning to Wisconsin in 1997.

"I write from my experiences," Beck said. "I sing a lot about the west, because that's where I love to be. I have a passion for the mountains. That comes out in my music. I sing about the freedom I get from being out there."

Since then, she has released two CDs, "Let the Wind Carry Me" and "Into the Sun", with a third, "As An Eagle Soars", set to be recorded this winter. She plans to make each of the titles to her CDs a separate line in an ongoing poem.

The fourth CD, which she says will take a few years, will be titled "Slow and Easy". It will be a blues and jazz compilation.

"I have enough material to make two more CDs," Beck said.

Her CDs are currently available on cdbaby.com but she says she sells most of her music at her live shows.

She said she has no plans as of right now to try and get signed by a major label, afraid she might get pigeonholed into a category.

"I don't think that's the way to go for us right now," Beck said. She added the independent route was more perfectly suited to her musical stylings.

"I'm kind of all over the place, so they don't know what to do with me."

Kona Cafe and Heaven City have provided a musical home for Beck and she has performances scheduled at those locations later this month.

"Our target market is baby boomers 40-plus," Beck said. "I go to venues with that clientele. The music is sophisticated. It's something you have to sit down and listen to."

She will play at Kona Cafe at 7:30 p. m. on July 29, and she will perform at Heaven City on July 21 and 6 p. m.

At Kona, Beck's shows usually draw between 15-30, while her performances at Heaven City fill the patio.

During the month of June, Beck performed five times at Heaven City, and she has performed at Kona Cafe five times since March.

"The reason why we play at Kona Cafe and Heaven City is we've developed a strong following there," Beck said. "The venues there are very quaint. We like to play smaller venues. My music is intimate. When we play larger venues, my music tends to get lost."

In September, she plans to tour New York. On Sept. 27, she will be performing live at the Sidewalk Cafe in downtown New York City.

Beck will get a chance to expand her local fan base when she plays at Estella's Italian Grille at 7 p. m. on July 13, 14, 20 and 22.