

North Iowa Feature Story

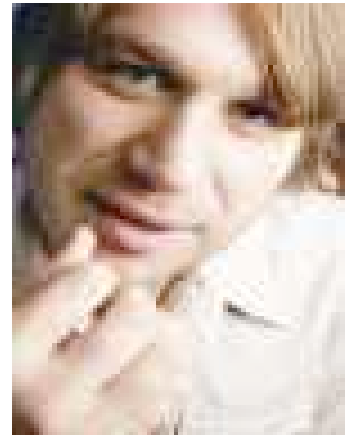
Posted online: Thursday, March 3, 2005 12:49 AM CST

Todd Snider returns to Surf

By Bryan Clark, *For The Globe Gazette*

Saturday marks the return of folk singer Todd Snider to the Surf Ballroom. Snider looks forward to returning to the Surf, saying, "It's one of those places that's an honor if you're a circuit person."

Snider's career took off when a member of Jimmy Buffet's band noticed him singing a song called "Talkin' Seattle Grunge Rock Blues" in a Memphis, Tenn., bar in the mid-1980s. In 1994, he released his first album, "Songs for the Daily Planet." He has since released six more albums, the newest being 2004's "East Nashville Skyline."



Snider was inspired to start playing music after seeing Jerry Jeff Walker in a bar when he was 19.

"I always loved writing," said Snider. "When I was a kid, I wanted to be Hunter Thompson. When I saw JJ Walker in that bar, I just watched his hands on the guitar and said to myself, 'I think I can do that,' so I just put my poetry and stories to music."

Almost all of his writing is autobiographical, but he says sometimes if it gets too personal he'll change the story around or mix it with one of his made-up stories.

Snider, a "compulsive scribbler and typer," writes every morning when he gets up, and continues to write throughout the day.

"The ideas I keep seem to be the ones that come at inopportune times, like when I'm in the lobby of a radio station to do an interview or about to go onstage," said Snider. "They come when I'm not trying, but I think the other writing throughout the day helps the good ideas to come."

Many artists have that one song that audiences always clamor for, and as a result the song ends up haunting them. For Snider, that song would probably be "Beer Run," a song made popular by Garth Brooks and "The Bob & Tom Show." Snider doesn't seem to mind having that "one song," though.

"'Beer Run' is definitely the song that could be that," said Snider. "It used to be the song about Seattle. But even if I came to a show and the people chanted it until I came out, I'd be OK with that. You kind of make peace with it."

When asked what question he wished interviewers would ask him more often, Snider replied, " 'What was it like when Bob Dylan came to your show and told you you were his favorite songwriter?' Because that would mean I got to hang out with Bob Dylan."

Surf manager Kevin Schoneman said of Snider's return, "Todd has not been touring in this part of the country recently and ticket sales are very strong for his return visit. For those not familiar with Todd, imagine a mixture of Alice's Restaurant-era Arlo Guthrie and John Prine with a little Robert Earl Keen thrown in. For the enlightened ones, get there early as the show is seated." Snider's Surf Ballroom show is Saturday, March 5.

Doors open at 8 p.m., and the show starts at 8:30. Tickets are \$12 in advance, and \$15 at the door. Tickets are available at CDGB's in Mason City, the Surf Ballroom in Clear Lake, or online at www.surfballroom.com.