

Exclusive: Nellie McKay's Funky, Funny New Video

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MY WEEKLY READER

NELLIE MCKAY

Nellie McKay has a new album and she's ready to...storm the Bastille! Covering classic pop tunes from the 1960s, McKay brings alive the era when protest didn't seem pointless, without ever losing her sense of humor or pop smarts. [She's on an extended tour](#) and you don't want to miss her terrific live shows, where McKay's deadpan humor always threatens to -- but never quite -- gleefully upstage her musical chops. God knows if she wanted McKay could do stand-up, host a variety show or some day in my dreams run for President. (Though the PETA-friendly McKay might want to concede Texas right off the bat.)

Catch her if you can and you'll be a fan for life. In New York, [McKay is playing 54 Below from April 13-April 18](#), an ideal venue for seeing her since it's in the heart of the theater district and it's only a matter of time before McKay starts creating musical theater staged on Broadway.

My Weekly Reader runs the gamut from the Kinks' "Sunday Afternoon" (in which a one-percenter moans about having to pay taxes) to the Crosby Stills & Nash album closer and Vietnam freak-out "Wooden Ships" that imagined a post-apocalyptic world, finishing off the CD with some haunting woodwind.

And it's fun! McKay gender flips playfully on both Herman's Hermits' "Mrs. Brown, You Have A Lovely Daughter" (with McKay turning to her trusty ukulele) and [the Beatles' "If I Fell."](#) Beatles engineer Geoff Emerick co-produces so the album is bursting with clever but subtle sonic touches.

Here's McKay digging into another unexpected cover: Moby Grapes' "Murder In My Heart For The Judge."

It subtly brings up inequities in the legal system during the song proper. And the music video is a retro delight, using classic cartoon snippets for the visuals. Then the tune goes nutters with a long instrumental jam featuring Bela Fleck wiggling out on banjo while McKay offers up chants for social justice alongside non sequiturs like "I'm white and I'm proud!" and (my favorite) "What do we want?" "Time travel!" "When do we want it?" "It's irrelevant!"

Does this undercut her passionate message? Far from it. You can sing great songs, raise awareness and have a chuckle at the same time. Knowing Nellie McKay, she wouldn't have it any other way.

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Note: Michael Giltz is provided with free tickets to shows with the understanding that he will be writing a review.