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Tuesday, November 9, 2004

You can hear Jeff Daniels live, unplugged

Michigan's star actor reveals his life in song with new CD

By Tom Long / Detroit News Film Critic

Jeff Daniels has been writing songs since the 1970s, something most people don't know because — unlike numerous other celebrities — for most of that time, he kept them to himself.

But a few years back, someone suggested Daniels might be able to raise funds for his pet project, the Purple Rose Theater in his hometown of Chelsea, by going out on stage and singing some of those songs. And lo and behold, it worked.

So now comes Jeff Daniels "Live and Unplugged," a CD collection of live performances, again intended to raise money for Purple Rose. Some of the songs date back as far as the late '70s, some are less than a year old, but they all share one thing: They're all reflections of Daniels' life and career.

"Since the mid-'70s I've been playing, but it was always just a hobby, something I did to relax," says Michigan's most high-profile movie star. "I've written now over 250 songs — and again, a lot of them are crap — but they're diary songs."

That diary has very funny entries, and it has some surprisingly tender ones as well. The album kicks off with "If William Shatner Can, I Can Too," in which Daniels pokes fun at celebrities who try to be musicians. It later describes the joy of being killed by Clint Eastwood in "The Dirty Harry Blues" and ventures bravely into politically incorrect territory on "You Can Drink an Ugly Girl Pretty."

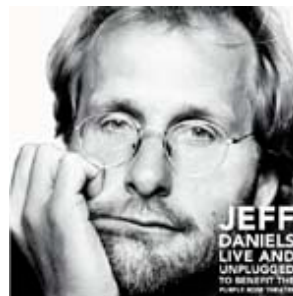
But Daniels also bares his heart effectively in "Kathy," painting a picture of the first date he had with his future wife, and "Momma Never Left Her Oldest Boy Alone," which thanks his mother for support and guidance.

"It's certainly a reflection of my film career, from 'Dumb and Dumber' to some of the more serious films," Daniels says.

His allegiance to his home state is evident as well, from chuckles with "The Lifelong Tiger Fan Blues" to a studio version of the traditional "Michigan, My Michigan," a song for returning and fallen soldiers.

Daniels will bring his act to the Purple Rose again in December and January and even plans to tour a bit around the state. But for now, the CDs are available through www.jeffdaniels.com, or select Borders, Barnes & Noble and Schuler's bookstores.

You can reach Tom Long at (313) 222-8879 or tlong@detnews.com.



The old and new songs are all reflections on Jeff Daniels' life and career.

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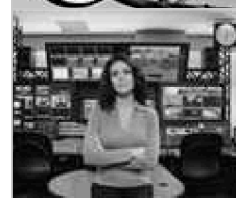
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