

West Side musician uses her talents for a noble purpose

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Contributor

Unlike many musicians, Rebekka Fisher is not focused solely on her own success. An accomplished artist with several albums under her belt and compilations of songs she's written since she was 12, Fisher is driven by her desire to help other female musicians get their big break in the music industry, and also give

something back to the community. She is accomplishing this through a musical event she co-founded in July 2001 called "Women Reign."

Like most successful artists, Fisher is all too familiar with the struggles of getting promoted and booking the gigs needed to survive in this highly competitive industry, something she believes is especially hard for women.

"I felt like there was an injustice in the music industry because there weren't really many women (artists) out there being supported. These women were seen as a novelty first, and as an artist second," the West Sider said.

As "Women Reign" was orchestrated, she partnered with the Family Violence Network (now the Harriet Tubman Center in Minneapolis) to create an event to raise money for food,



Rebekka Fisher uses her musical talents to provide opportunities for women.

housing and transportation needs of women's shelters. Grassroots promotional tactics—a street team distributing flyers, word-of-mouth advertising and a few press releases—helped draw 400 hundred people to the Minnesota Music Café for the "Women Reign" debut three years ago. A raffle for prizes brought in nearly \$1,000 for the Family Violence Network which was used to pay for taxi fares for women who contacted the network for help.

"I was so surprised with how much people just wanted to give—to do anything they could to help, with money or with other donations," Fisher said, adding that attendance and proceeds have generally remained the same every year.

While fundraising efforts for "Women Reign" were successful, its objective to showcase female artists' talents and diverse musical blends also went well. What began as an event featuring four performers, including the founder's "Rebekka Fisher Band," has expanded in size and variety. Up to seven bands perform during a 40-minute set at each benefit event. This year's event, held November 16 at the Minnesota Music Café, included Fisher, Run Miss Scarlet, Amy Angeline, Jenny Case, Jill Holly and Dear Jupiter, with Pamela McNeill as the headlining act.

Fisher follows a simple process when selecting musicians for the "Women Reign" lineup: the group must be solely female or led by a female; it must have at least a demo or a CD in

distribution; and a woman must be the source of at least 50 percent of the songwriting efforts. Most acts are penciled in on a first-come, first-served basis; therefore, it is not rare for Fisher to receive offers from potential performers immediately after an event ends.

"I think when people saw that it was done well, they thought, 'Hey this is something that I want to be a part of,' and now we have a waiting list for the bands," she said.

Fisher added that she tries to feature new artists each year. She hopes that past performers will come support the new musicians.

Seeing the success of the event, Fisher said she feels like a "proud mother."

"It's been a real pleasure to be the bridge between the function and the giving to the charity because that's where you really feel like you're making a difference. It's given me the opportunity to hear all these other bands, so I feel like we're building a community of all these women who are being celebrated as artists," she said. "There's so much negativity going on in the music business, and it's nice to have something positive going on. And this gives an avenue for women to get exposed for their work and to get appreciated. All we really want is to be appreciated for our work, and maybe leave a legacy."

For more information on "Women Reign," contact Fisher at 651-649-4686 or www.rebekkafisher.com/womenreign.

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