

INTERVIEW

Between her head and the sky

Artist/musician Yoko Ono on peace, love and the importance of staying true to herself

BY ELIO IANNACCI

NOT SURPRISINGLY, “Act your age” is an adage that Yoko Ono would consider, well, old and outdated. After all, the 76-year-old singer/artist is the oldest person in history to top the *Billboard* dance chart with a trio of clubland number ones—namely, her bass-heavy dance-floor numbers “I’m Not Getting Enough,” “Give Peace a Chance 2009” and “No, No, No.” But you’d expect no less from a woman who kicked off her 69th birthday by singing to a crowd of shirtless gay men at New York’s infamous hot spot, The Roxy—set time at 3 a.m., to boot!

Her current schedule and accomplishments are just as gutsy. She received the 2009 lifetime achievement award at the Venice Biennale and launched “Anton’s Memory,” her most recent exhibit. Meanwhile, her newly recorded indie rock album with the Plastic Ono Band—*Between My Head and the Sky*—will be released, appropriately, on September 21, this year’s International Day of Peace. Her new disc with POB includes an updated lineup for the group, which features her son, Sean Lennon, as the group’s musical director—a job once occupied by her husband, John Lennon.

Prime Time caught up with the ever-busy Ms. Ono to reflect on peace, love and a few misunderstandings.

Prime Time: *What were the main differences between recording with your husband as opposed to your son?*

Yoko Ono: John was intuitive and had a deep emotional understanding about art. Sean was concerned with being a polished musician and he was much more careful. Both were protective of me. But I must say John was very much a part of this record, too. He wasn’t physically in the studio, but he was there.

PT: *When Sean was a child, was he aware of what line of work his parents were in?*

YO: Well, I was shocked that Sean knew all of my earlier songs so well because John and I had made sure that Sean wouldn’t be bombarded with our history while growing up. For the longest time, we didn’t let him know that John was a Beatle. Now he knows my songs, John’s solo songs and all the Beatles’ work, too.

PT: *You spent your 69th birthday singing at*



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Yoko Ono and son Sean Lennon in New York, 2009.

a packed club with shirtless men as most of your audience. Do you think most people would see that as unusual?

YO: What some people [would] think is a strange situation or a weird experience doesn’t faze me at all. Look at my life so far. I feel so connected to the gay and lesbian community because, like me, they’ve been persecuted for no reason. This year, I had my birthday in the studio and recorded [my new album’s title track] “Between My Head and the Sky” as a gift [to myself].

PT: *Have you ever been told to act your age?*

YO: I think whoever invented that term is so close-minded. Pretty soon, those people who continue to use phrases like those will be my age and they’ll see the light.

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You can read the whole Yoko Ono interview at thestar.com/primetime