Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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90-MIN. SET part of National Women's History Month tribute

When folk guitarist Jill Cohn gave Amy Roanhorse of Window Rock, Ariz., a free CD featuring music recorded over the years, an instant relationship was born. Cohn's Gallup performance earlier this month at the Octavia Fellin Library was the first time each of the women met.

"I was just blown away," Roanhorse, 29, said. "I loved it (the CD). I loved the gesture."

The Seattle-born Cohn is a contemporary folk solo artist who performed March 6 at Fellin as part of the library's celebration of National Women's History Month. The month runs through March and highlights the contributions of women in world society.

Cohn played a captivating 90-minute set that featured songs about relationships, spiritualty, love, places that she's traveled and family. In a general sense, Cohn's songs pay homage to folk mainstays like Joni Mitchell and Sarah McLachlan.

“I think some of the easiest songs to sing and write about are about family and relationships,” Cohn said. “They are topics that everyone can relate to.”

A full-time musician since 1999, Cohn opened the set with a tune from her most recent CD entitled “Heartstrings Touching Ground,” a diverse release in both subject and music, Cohn told the 15 or so people that came out to see the free show. The release gets into touchy subjects like immigration and economic inequality.

The songs “Honey Dear” and “Missouri” from “Heartstrings” inspired Roanhorse to tap her toes and move her head up and down to Cohn’s coffee shop-like beat.

“I think she is a pure folk singer,” Jacqueline O’Mara, 45, of Gallup said. “It fits right in at a coffee shop atmosphere or small indoor venue. It would even be appropriate in a book store.”

Cohn’s music has shared the stage with superstars such as the Dave Matthews Band, Jewel, Cheryl Wheeler and Dave Bromberg, among others. In 2016, Cohn was a featured guest artist on Nebraska Public Radio and South Dakota Public Radio’s live broadcasts. “Heartstrings Touching Ground” was produced by the Grammy-award winning Malcolm Burn whose production credits include Bob Dylan and Daniel Lanois – the latter who has worked with rock mega-group U2 over the years.

Gallup Library Director Mary Ellen Pellington said Cohn performed about a little more than a year ago at Fellin and was a hit with library patrons. She said she’ll look into possible future performances by Cohn at the el Morro Theatre, since people seem to like Cohn’s music.

“The people that came out both times she was here really liked her, liked her music,” Pellington said. “(Jill Cohn) is a very good musician.”

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