

HANGIN' WITH ...

GEORGIA GEIS

Singer-guitarist brings her 'Antidote' to Tempe

By Georgia Geis
The Arizona Republic

Singer-guitarist, Jenny Toomey isn't exactly a household name.

Yet, her picture has graced the cover of *Billboard*, she has been featured in *Spin* and *Rolling Stone*, and she has been asked to speak at Harvard, MIT and Temple University.

She is in the midst of a 21-city tour that brings her to Nita's Hideaway in Tempe on Saturday. The tour is to promote her new solo two-disc CD *Antidote* (Misra Records) and the work of the non-profit advocacy group the Future of Music Coalition.

Unlike the Britney Spears and Janet Jacksons of the music industry, Toomey drives with her band in a van across the country.

Toomey's acoustic pop on *Antidote* is sometimes bluesy, sometimes haunting, sometimes twangy, but always intelligent and honest, infused with the sounds of violin, cello, horns, organ and piano. Lyrics make you wonder how many dysfunctional relationships Toomey has lived through.

"I do think I'm having a better time translating the sound I hear in my head and the arrangements are more elaborate and the performances are more direct and intimate and the lyrics are more personal," Toomey said.

Her solo sound is more mellow than the music she did with the band Tsunami, Grenadine; Liquorice and the punk-pop band Slack.

Known in the underground indie-rock scene as a veteran for her do-it-yourself work ethic, Toomey has been making music for the past 13 years.

Toomey and her friend, Kristin Thomson, founded their own record label, Simple

Machines, in 1990. For eight years, they successfully produced more than 75 records of their own and friends' bands.

Their most popular release was the 24-page booklet, *The Mechanics Guide to Putting Out Records*. Now in its sixth edition with more than 10,000 copies distributed, the book is still informing and inspiring musicians everywhere. You can find the guide in a free digital format on the Web sites www.indiecentre.com and www.insound.com (click on machine).

"There is nothing that you can't do with a little time, creativity, enthusiasm and hard work," reads the introduction.

This same attitude is the driving force behind the creation of the Future of Music Coalition in which Toomey is the executive director. Even though one of the goals expressed in the FMC manifesto is to "serve as a voice for musicians in Washington, D.C., where critical decisions are being made," Toomey does not think of herself as a watchdog.

"Musicians are a very diverse group. There is no way for me or anyone to be the watchdog for all their interests," she said.

The artists' rights group was host to the first policy summit at Georgetown University to discuss such issues as copyrights in a digital age. The conference in January drew 500 musicians, lawyers and policymakers, people as diverse as Sen. Orrin Hatch and Chuck D from Public Enemy. They hope to reach even more people with the summit this January.

Toomey plays at 9 p.m. Saturday at Nita's Hideaway, 1816 E Rio Salado Parkway.

To find out more about the work of the Future of Music Coalition and Toomey, visit www.futureofmusic.org and www.jennytoomey.com.