

MELISSA ETHERIDGE

b. May 29, 1961

“What do they know about this love anyway?”

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Melissa Etheridge is a Grammy and Academy Award-winning singer and songwriter. She came out at the 1993 Triangle Ball, the Clinton administration’s inaugural gala for gays and lesbians, when she exclaimed, “Gee, I’m really excited to be here, and I’m really proud to have been a lesbian all my life!”

She was born in Leavenworth, Kansas, and studied at The Berklee School of Music in Boston. Etheridge moved to Los Angeles and evolved from a bluesy sound to her renowned rock/alternative style.

Etheridge shot to stardom with her trademark blues-rock hit “Come to My Window,” for which she received a Grammy Award in 1994 for Best Female Rock Vocal Performance. With its powerful lyrics, the song became an anthem for gay rights.

In 2004, Etheridge was diagnosed with breast cancer. At the 2005 Grammy Awards, she gave one of her most memorable performances with Janis Joplin’s hit, “Piece of My Heart.” She exposed her head, left bald from chemotherapy.

Etheridge’s songs have not only entertained, but have helped heal in times of tragedy. Her songbook includes “Scarecrow,” a tribute to Matthew Shepard; “Tuesday Morning,” dedicated to the memory of Mark Bingham, a hero of 9/11; “Four Days,” about those devastated by Hurricane Katrina; and “I Run for Life,” an anthem for breast cancer survivors.

Julie Cypher, Etheridge’s long-term ex-partner, gave birth to their two children. After their breakup, Etheridge exchanged vows with actress Tammy Lynn Michaels. In 2006, Michaels had twins.

In 2006, Etheridge received the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) Stephen F. Kolzak Award, which honors openly lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender media professionals who have made a significant difference in promoting equal rights for the community. “I Need to Wake Up,” featured in the film “An Inconvenient Truth,” won an Academy Award for Best Original Song (2007).

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