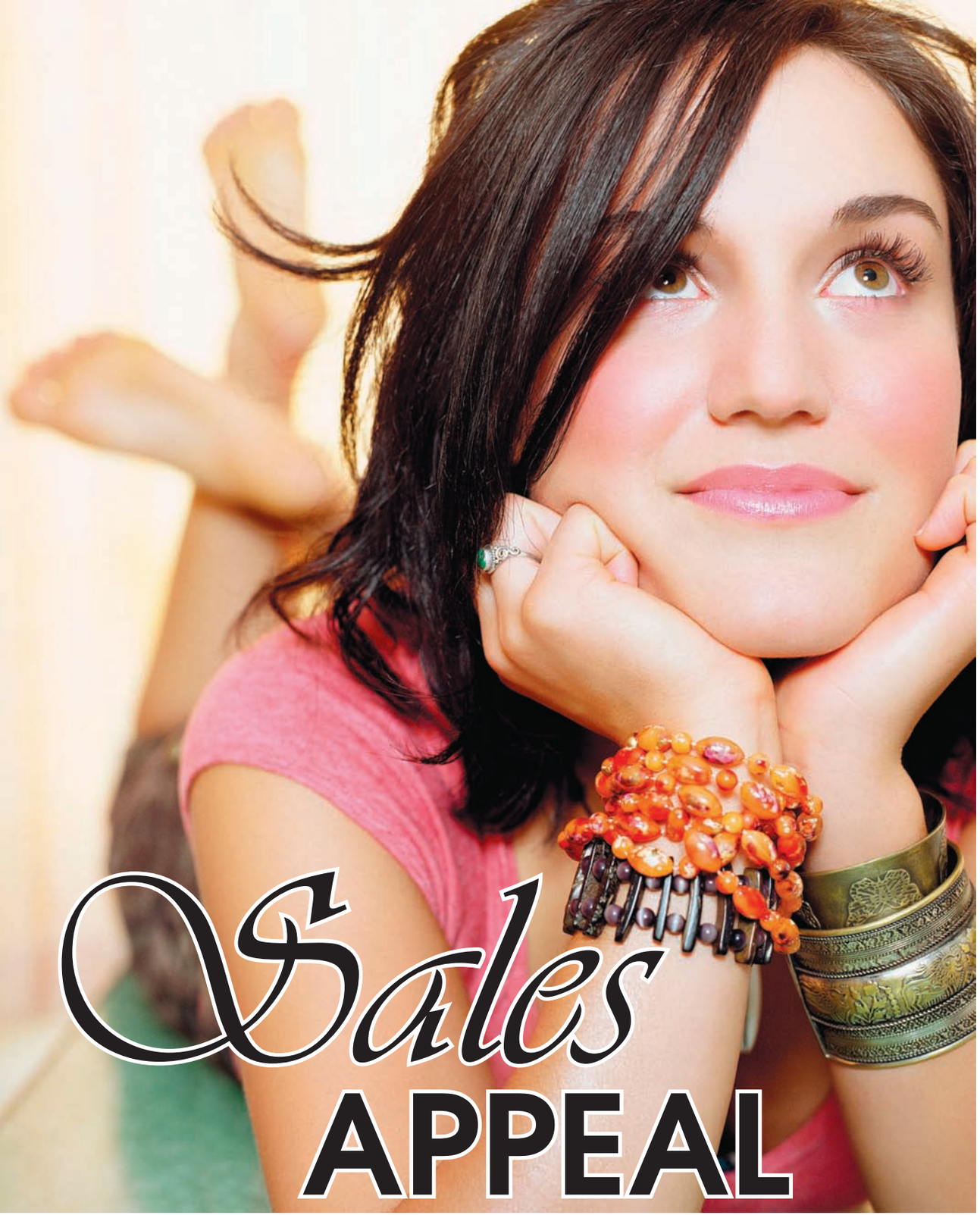

SONGWRITER, MUSICIAN, AND ARTIST... QUITE SIMPLY...

SALES APPEAL

BY DAVID MORRISON

"This is an astonishing debut. Astonishing. This kid is gonna be a giant. A giant. You heard it here first."

Odd it might be that the words launching my inaugural article for The Beacon are not actually mine, but in respect of introducing the subject matter, I'd struggle to top such an emphatic and accurate statement. Posted on the review notice board of an online CD store by a purchaser of 20-year old Errington resident Hayley Sales' "*Sunseed*" (Universal), the points therein are difficult to contest. I could amplify it, however, by adding that an acquaintance recently commented as if it was already written that Sales will be a millionaire within three years. Tops.

'Astonishing debut'? Certainly: Sales wrote, produced and mixed "*Sunseed*" as a teenager and the result, bristling with class and confidence, is a work of rarely encountered maturity in an artist so young.

'Giant'? Sure: already tagged "the female Jack Johnson" or "the new Norah Jones," Sales possesses the voice, lyrical directness and effortless grasp of pure pop melody to make a substantial international impact – and quickly.

These comparisons are far from idle, Sales' breezy acoustic pop washed in particular by gentle, Johnson-esque surf grooves, marking her an instant FM radio staple for years to come. That she possesses abundant likeability – projecting herself as an energetic, happy-go-lucky hippie chick – and is also blessed with catwalk looks undeniably further strengthens her case.

Named for an obscure 1973 documentary exploring the origins of Oriental mysticism, "*Sunseed*" seemingly heralds the arrival of a precocious new talent, but the fact is Sales has barely stopped creating since she shifted from crawl to walk. A driven soul who believes "there is always something to learn and a new rock to overturn," she also paints, writes poetry and has scores of theatrical performances behind her. Bizarrely, she has even starred in a cult independent horror movie, and at the mainstream end of the celluloid spectrum, you may have seen her in a TV commercial for a moreish multigrain snack.

I managed to snatch a few minutes from Sales' hectic schedule, with her fresh off a short run of shows opening for veteran Aussie rockers INXS; I asked how she's coping with her life in the spotlight:

"It's kind of like being on the ultimate magical mystery tour. You just have to fling your hands up in the air and go wherever the road leads! The praise is very surreal, I must admit... I'm still the girl who mows the lawn and digs holes for plants in the garden. I just keep focused on the reasons I'm doing the music. That keeps it real, keeps me grounded."

Plugged in she may be, yet behind Sales' sunny exterior is a champion of various diverse charities and action groups including Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Stephen Lewis Foundation. Eager to keep involved and visible in this arena, Sales fully intends using her platform to effect positive change. With environmental concerns particularly dear to her heart, I sought her views on July's heavily criticized Live Earth concerts:

"I most definitely would have played one of the shows, had I been asked. I know there have been negative side effects to the concerts, but I believe the current climate crisis is an issue that needs to be put into the limelight. In my opinion, it doesn't so much matter whether the concerts boosted the artists' record sales, or used electricity; the fact that millions of people on earth were forced to, if only for a day, question and think about the pressing issue of global warming, goes to show that it's served its purpose. If we don't start changing the way we relate with our environment, we may not have an environment to relate to at all."

Sales will undoubtedly voice her concerns to audiences of another G8 nation in August when visiting the UK for a two week tour. Commencing with a key London date, a comfortable live environment then awaits in the surf festival circuit where she'll meet and play for many kindred souls. They'll like her.

"Music is a playground where we all can gather, swing around the monkey bars, talk about things, cry about things, laugh about things and discuss things in a way no other medium allows," she informs me in positive conclusion.

I like her, too – and sure agree she's going to be a 'giant.' You heard it here first... er... second. ~

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