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## OU alumna joins Kid Rock's national tour

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

OU alumna **Karen Newman** has hopped aboard the rap-metal bandwagon and is loving every minute of it.

Newman, most widely known as the national anthem singer at Detroit Red Wings home games, recently joined Kid Rock's Twisted Brown Trucker group as one of two background vocalists for his current national concert tour. The band opened in Saginaw in January and performed at The Palace of Auburn Hills last week. The tour currently is scheduled to end in November.

"This show is an amazing one to be part of," said Newman from her Bloomfield Township home on one of her rare days off. "Kid Rock is probably one of the more talented people in the industry. He goes from playing drums to guitar to keyboards, and, of course, he DJs. To work with somebody of that caliber in such a high energy show is wonderful."

Newman, who grew up in Rochester and received a B.A. from Oakland in commercial music, is no stranger to the rock stage, having been a background vocalist with Detroit's Bob Seger during his 1996 North American tour. However, there are some differences between working with the earthy, passionate Seger and the rollicking, boisterous, bad boy of rap-rock.

"Kid Rock's band is younger than the Seger group I was part of," Newman said. "And, naturally, Kid Rock's band does all the typical 'rock star' things, which the Seger guys have kind of passed.

"The environment is also a little different. The Kid Rock tour doesn't have all the glitz and glamour of a Seger tour. It's not as glamorous as people might think. There's a lot of long travel by tour bus, which can get a little rough. The bus has bunk beds stacked three high, and they put me in the bottom bunk. I can't even completely sit up. We go straight from one arena to the next and sometimes arrive at 6 a.m. Seger's band flew in a private plane."

But what makes the tour enjoyable is the camaraderie she shares with all the musicians.

"Contrary to what a lot of people might think, Kid Rock is really a nice guy," Newman said. "His stage persona is a part of him, too, but there's also a nicer part people don't always see. He's very considerate of others. I like how he works. When he's handing out criticism, he does it in a way that you don't feel criticized, which is really an art. Ultimately, it's his responsibility to make sure everything clicks, and it does.

"I enjoy singing his remake of (Bad Company's) 'Feel Like Makin' Love' the most. It starts out pretty much like the original, kind of laid-back, but then it busts into this absolutely heavy, passionate, guitar-driven section, which is just amazing. You can't help but move when you hear it. When I walk onstage, I feel the same way with him as I felt with Seger. It's the best part of my day."

Newman's days also are filled with anthem singing (up to 41 times each season plus the playoffs), benefits and charity work (about three appearances a month), a local annual Christmas concert series, commercials and other endorsements, and caring for her 2-year-old twins.

"After I completed my last Christmas concert series, I told myself to take a huge step back," Newman said. "But you can never plan for a great opportunity like the Kid Rock tour. I try to sing at all the Red Wings games when I'm in town. The games have to fall Sunday through Wednesday because I travel Thursday through Saturday. This week I'll leave for Kansas City, Tulsa and Oklahoma City."

Newman has seen the recording end of the business as well. She's released four CDs since her 1997 debut "Moment in the Wind." A fifth recording, made a couple of years ago, may be in stores this summer. It contains what Newman calls "timeless pop music," including some original material written specifically for her by members of Seger's Silver

## Bullet Band.

"I really enjoy being a background vocalist and my other work, but what I prefer is to be a lead singer doing original music," Newman said. "A lot of people have this particular image of me based on my anthem singing, but I feel most natural in a heavy rock and roll element. It just seems to move me the most. Maybe someday I'll have the opportunity to make those kind of recordings."

The career success Newman has experienced and her knowledge of the music industry – from performing to recording, production and promotion – might not have come about had she not studied at Oakland.

"I absolutely would not be where I am today without what I learned at Oakland University," Newman said. "The commercial music program was incredible. I learned so much from Ray Allvin, who was the music department chair. He's the one who developed and created the program, and I also worked with him as a member of the Meadow Brook Estate. We traveled, recorded in studios, learned how to set up stage equipment, and also the basics like music theory. I also learned a lot from him about the business of music and the marketing and promotion of music. He always said you'll never get anywhere without the three Ds – drive, determination and desire. That's something I still live by today."

Newman continues to maintain her relationship with Oakland by working with Applied Music Instructor Jan Albright, who serves as her singing coach.

"I see Jan quite often," Newman said. "She's saved me from many cases of potential vocal problems. We started off with a working relationship, but she's also now a friend."

"I'm very flattered that people from Oakland University continue to take an interest in my career, and I'm proud to have graduated from OU. Anytime there's a chance to reminisce about my time at Oakland, it's very good for me."

To learn more about Newman, her recordings, charity work, her High Heels Records company and more, visit the official **Karen Newman** Web site. Visit the official **Kid Rock** Web site to learn more about his current tour and latest self-titled album.

### SUMMARY

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