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## ANI DIFRANCO HAS COMPANY ON HER NEW ALBUM, *KNUCKLE DOWN*

Singer/songwriter/guitarist Ani DiFranco is about to release a new album. It's called *Knuckle down*, and it's due in stores January 25, 2005.

Now, if you've followed Ani's career for a while, that may not sound like news; after all, she's been putting out at least one CD a year since 1990. But this time—for the first time in her career—she has invited a fellow musician to co-produce the new record with her. That honor goes to Joe Henry, an acclaimed performer and songwriter with nine highly regarded solo discs to his name.

"I invited him to share the stage with me months back, and we really resonated," Ani told an interviewer for *The Aquarian Weekly* in the spring of 2004. "Every night we'd sit around after the shows and talk, and we discovered we have a lot of the same sensibilities and energy when it comes to making records." Inspired by that initial contact, DiFranco invited Henry to work with her on her next project. Another major change: Ani composed new songs with their role in the future album in mind, "as opposed to just writing songs and looking at the collection later in the game and beginning to conceive of what the record is."

On her last album, *Educated Guess* (2003), DiFranco performed completely solo, playing all the instruments, recording the tracks in her own home, and even engineering the disc herself. This time around, while a few songs are still primarily one-person affairs, she's also joined by more than half a dozen guest musicians throughout the album. Many of their names will be recognizable to people who have followed Ani's recent career: current stage partner Todd Sickafoose (on bass), former band member Julie Wolf (melodica), occasional openers Tony Scherr (electric guitar), and Noe Venable (voice), as well as Righteous Babe recording artist Andrew Bird (violin, glockenspiel, whistling). Less familiar to fans but equally notable are the contributions of Patrick Warren (piano, samples, chamberlin), Jay Bellerose (drums and percussion), and Niki Haris (voice).

The music Ani has created with their help is as stunning as ever, from such poignant yet instantly irresistible tunes as "Studying Stones" and "Recoil" to the spoken-word piece "Parameters," a harrowing account of a woman finding an uninvited stranger in her bedroom one night. On "Paradigm," Ani recalls helping her mother's efforts at grassroots activism, when she was "just a girl in a room full of women / licking stamps and laughing," an image that becomes a perfect symbol of "the feeling of community brewing / of democracy happening."

Through twelve new songs as intricately crafted as short stories, Ani DiFranco creates another unforgettable musical self-portrait of a woman coming to grips with love's twists and turns, confronting the legacy of her family, and learning to live on her own terms.

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