

# PROVIDENCE JOURNAL

## Music Scene by Rick Massimo: Michelle Malone feels 'more blessed than ever'

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Ask Michelle Malone where she's calling from and she says, "I'd tell you, but I don't know."

That's life as an independent artist, and she says she wouldn't have it any other way.

Malone just released Debris, her 10th record, this month, and it's a winning combination of classic-rock and blues styles, with Malone's full-bore shouting and singing paired with her own melodic and rocking guitar parts and no-nonsense songwriting. The influence of The Rolling Stones, Janis Joplin and Faces-era Rod Stewart is strong, but not cloying or self-conscious, and ballads such as "Marked" convey a real tenderness.

Born in Atlanta, Malone's parents were musicians, and she would go on the road with them in the summer, "sit at the bar with my little Shirley Temple and think it was the coolest thing ever." Along the way, her mother and grandmother introduced her to their Linda Ronstadt, Bonnie Raitt, Billie Holiday and Mahalia Jackson records. "I loved it all," Malone recalls.

Malone and her band are touring behind Debris the old-fashioned, do-it-yourself way, but it wasn't always like that for her. In 1990, she made it to Arista Records for the Relentless disc, but that deal quickly fizzled and her next record was on the independent Strange Bird Songs label, where she still is. (Her old recordings are on her Web site, [www.michellemalone.com](http://www.michellemalone.com).)

"It's really the best of all worlds," she says about the small-label experience. "It just really makes sense, especially if you've been around long enough that you know what you're doing." She calls big-label life "funny math" and says "It's business on their end, but the way they pay musicians is more like slave labor."

In that world, it's all about getting on the radio, she says, and in the early '90s she and Arista were told "our rotation is chick-heavy; we're already playing two out of 40 [acts in rotation]. Now they still say that, but they say, 'We've already got five women; we can't play another.' So I guess things have gotten a little better."

She says things are going really well — she's got a devoted fan base and a great band, and what else could she ask for?

"I feel more blessed than I have ever been in my whole life," she says.

Well, it's pointed out, anything that keeps your head above water as a musician is a success.

"Honey, I'm better than that! I'm floating on a big raft with a cocktail!"