

# Nicole Edwards is *Sparkin'* with jazz magic

By ANDREW HOSHKIW  
The Whitehorse Star

Whitehorse songstress Nicole Edwards has gotten on with her day.

Despite battling scleroderma, a degenerative, life-threatening illness, Edwards is set to release her third album at a special concert on Saturday, Jan. 12 at the Yukon Arts Centre.

Edwards' debut album, *On With*

no hitches or glitches. That's a nice way to do an album."

Scleroderma is a chronic illness where the proteins of connective tissues form excessive deposits in the skin and other organs.

Edwards suffers from diffuse scleroderma, or systemic sclerosis, the most serious form of the disease. At this level, it can seriously affect internal organs such as the heart, kidneys, lungs and intestines, and can be fatal.

"It is in my lungs," Edwards said, explaining that it makes breathing difficult, reducing her energy levels.

"I've been performing more jazz than original stuff lately," she continued. "I got into jazz because I'm not playing instruments anymore. My hands are deformed."

In an effort to overcome the illness, which was diagnosed in 2001, Edwards has undergone hyperbaric oxygen

therapy, an experimental treatment involving exposure to pure oxygen in a pressurized environment, beginning in 2006.

As hyperbaric oxygen therapy is not supported by the government, a fundraiser was held in March of that year to finance the treatment. The result has been a strong improvement in Edwards' condition.

"I'm doing so much better than a year ago," she said excitedly. "The hyperbaric oxygen treatments that I've been doing have made a dramatic improvement for me."

"I still have a chronic condition, I'm just able to do so much more than I was a year ago. I'm just thrilled and feel very thankful about that."

With improved prospects, Edwards is now able to integrate a greater musical component into her life.

"I'm really thankful for all the peo-



*My Day*, came out in 2001. Full of blues and rock music, on it, Edwards plays guitars and sings vibrantly.

Four years later, vowing never to give up music, she released *Joy Seeker*, a five-track EP of folk music.

Now with her new album, *Sparkin'*, Edwards shifts her musical efforts towards jazz.

"It's a genre change for me," Edwards said in an interview earlier this week. "It was a live studio recording - we just went in and spend a weekend recording."

While studio albums are traditionally made by recording different instruments separately and then layering the music together, by recording it live, the process was made much easier, said Edwards.

"We really enjoyed working together and it went really smoothly," she added. "It was fun and there were



STAR File Photo

**FORGING ON - Nicole Edwards (right) and Anne Turner perform at the Relay for Life in June 2007 in Rotary Peace Park. Edwards' health has improved dramatically since she underwent treatment outside the territory.**

ple who supported me with it," she said. "It's nice to be able to say the money they put towards it really helped."

"You don't know until you try

something if it's going to help or not."

She had special praise for fellow musician Annie Avery.

"Annie's really been a mentor for me in this new genre that I've been exploring," said Edwards. "She's been a huge support - we have fun together, she's such a lovely person."

On *Sparkin'*, Edwards is joined by Avery on piano and organ, bassist Jon Heaton, drummer Ed White and Sebastien Bujon on saxophone. As Bujon will be away for the performance, Duncan Sinclair will take his place.

"It's a great combination of great musicianship and supportive people and fun personalities," said Edwards, talking about her supporting band. "We enjoy each other."

Engineering, mixing and mastering was done by Bob Hamilton and the album was recorded at his Whitehorse studio.

"He's got great ears, a great person to work with," said Edwards.

The album consists of 12 songs, two originals by Edwards and 10 jazz standards. The originals are *We've Got Love* and the title track, *Sparkin'*.

"They both speak of love," said Edwards. "*We've Got Love* is a song about how life can be a real struggle sometimes, but if you have love in your life, it's all going to be OK."

"That's been my experience with my illness. I've had so much love and support in my life, it's made everything OK."

"*Sparkin'* is a fun, playful song

with a love theme. If you're stressed out or grumpy or whatever, you have to find some sparkin' in your life to make things OK."

The standards include songs by Cole Porter, Edith Piaf and George Gershwin.

"So many of the songs I sang as a little girl," said Edwards. "There's an Edith Piaf song on there which for the longest while I didn't cover, but then I just went for it and found it's a song people like to hear."

A multi-linguist, Edwards sings in English, French and Spanish on the album, giving listeners an array of jazz styles.

"One of the things I like about singing jazz is that there are some pretty clever lyrics in these old songs, and some are dramatic and it's fun to sing expressively," she said.

"There's less pressure when I'm doing jazz, it's just fun, like doing theatre in a way - you can express the story without it being revealing about you."

The CD release concert, which will be caberet-style with seating on the stage, will take place at 8 p.m. at the Yukon Arts Centre Saturday, Jan. 12.

Opening the show is a performance by another jazz band, Come Eat A Cat.

"They're four youth, emerging artists, and they're really good," said Edwards. "That's going to be exciting."

The group consists of Fabian Brook, Ben Barrett-Forrest, Graeme Poile and Kieran Poile.