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**All the music-biz muck that's fit to rake**

By Peter Howell, Toronto Star

Tori Amos & a sad little boy: Hot pop newcomer Tori Amos wears her heart on her sleeve, and she expects you to do the same. A conversation with her is like a swan-dive deep into the psyche, dredging up barely remembered memories of past hurts.

She firmly believes that everyone had a bad childhood. "And it doesn't mean sexually molested," she explained in an April chat.

"It just means something like what happened to my friend, Eric, when he was 5 years old. You finish the little test that you've been given to do in kindergarten, and you turn over the page and do a little drawing for the teacher, and she says, 'No! Bad! Bad Eric! You're supposed to finish!'

"Do you know that affected that little boy for the rest of his life?"

Naturally, then, Amos was all ears when told the story of a little boy in Grade 2 in Calgary and a Valentine's Day many years ago.

The boy and his friend, Dougie, had slaved over making a gaily decorated cardboard box for their classroom, to hold Valentine cards brought by the students and the teacher.

Everyone was supposed to bring enough Valentines so none of the students went without.

But the little boy was a bit of a nerd, and no one except the teacher had a Valentine for him, even though he'd helped make the box.

Even Dougie didn't give him a Valentine. "I forgot," he weaseled.

To drive the knifeblade of unpopularity even deeper, on the way home at lunchtime, the one Valentine the little boy received from the teacher was blown away in a rainstorm.

He arrived at home soaked with rain and tears.

"That was painful," Amos consoled. "These things happen, and although you try to protect kids from getting hurt, nobody deals with these things properly when they do happen.

"Somebody should have been aware that you didn't get a Valentine, and done something about it."