

Luxury Experience

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Kelly Flint – Interview

By Debra C. Argen

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Luxury Experience catches up with Kelly Flint to talk about her debut solo album - *Drive All Night*.



LEM: Kelly, Congratulations on your debut solo album, *Drive All Night*, released on **BeBop Records**. I have been a Dave's True Story fan since I heard the "first story" and your sexy siren of a voice singing Dave Cantor's jazz stories. After thirteen years of singing Dave's songs, with the release of *Drive All Night*, you finally have the opportunity to sing your own songs, and your voice has never sounded better.

How long have these songs been playing in your mind? What was the catalyst for you to write and record *Drive All Night* as a solo album?

Kelly: Although I copyrighted the songs in 2007, I wrote "Drive All Night" and "Marilena" in the 1990s. I do not know what happened. I felt like a messenger, rather than delivering a message with Dave's True Story. I thought that if I delivered the lyric as true to the song as I could, the song would be better. Maybe I evolved a bit beyond that. When I wrote Blood and Bone, it gave me a happy feeling to do that, to write a song and finish it. Over the course of 18 months, I wrote 24 songs. Some are there are not so great. I wanted the album to have 10 songs, not 14, but I could not weed them out; there are 10 more songs that I like. More songs are coming, but I am not in writing mode, although I did write a song last month, and another one this weekend.

LEM: Was there a different feeling releasing *Drive All Night* versus a new release with Dave's True Story?

Kelly: Yeah, the whole thing felt different. No one would ever imagine this. When DTS came out, people surrounded us with help. Great musicians, lawyers, managers, heavy music business people would all give their feedback. I had terrible stage fright. Before DTS, I sang with a band and one night I set up my microphone behind the drummer, and of course, they told me that I could not do this; that I had to be out front. With DTS, people were counting on me. I could hide behind Dave's stories, and have grown and become more confident. Dave Cantor is a very shy person. Dave did not want to be a performer, but I wanted to do it, so we did. Because of DTS, I was able to grow.

LEM: You play guitar and sing with an impressive list of musicians on *Drive All Night* including Gerry Leonard (played with David Bowie) (acoustic and electric guitars, mandolin), Doug Yowell (plays with Suzanne Vega, Duncan Sheik) (drums and percussion), Jeff Eyrich (acoustic bass), Carmen Yates (guitar, background vocals), Libby Johnson (background vocals), Jon Dryden (B3, wurlitzer piano), Steve Rossiter (organ), Max Nordheim (keyboards), and Jacob Lawson (violins).

How did you assemble this talent?

Kelly: Jeff (Eyrich) had a lot to do with that. He produced Dave's True Story for a lot of time, is very organized, and has great contacts. Jeff produced the album and put together the musicians. I was thrilled to have this group with me, especially Gerry (Leonard) and Doug (Yowell).

Last year I had a vocal injury where I lost my voice for a couple of months. Originally, we were going to record a much more homier album, but then we had to postpone this record project. I was concerned whether I would get my voice back, but looked at this time as it was not the album that I was supposed to be making, and made this album instead. When Doug came onboard the project and brought Gerry, it was a blessing in disguise.

LEM: *Drive All Night* is an emotionally-packed album where each of the songs has an underlying sadness to it, yet at the end of the album, the listener does not feel sad, but somehow comes out "cleaner" after being dragged emotionally raw on the musical journey with you. The album has a distinct 70s folk feel to it, where the singer/songwriters Joni Mitchell, Carly Simon, and Joan Baez come to mind.

You wrote all but one of the songs on *Drive All Night*. What was the inspiration for the album and the lyrics to the songs?

Kelly: For me, I have been through a lot. My childhood was not a piece of cake by any means; it was traumatic. I felt that if I could find the right metaphor, I would be saved. I tried to write prose, poetry, a novel, short stories, and wrote all the while with DTS. However, after sitting at the computer all day, I came away feeling angrier than when I started. I did not feel that I was getting where I wanted to go. I did not feel a release. When I wrote *Blood and Bone*, I wanted to make songs that were helpful. Everybody has been through a lot of stuff. I wanted to write songs that made people feel comfortable, give them a feeling of hope.

In terms of art, a lot that we go through is awful. My favorite song is by Steve Earl - "Lonelier than This," which does not have any hope, but when you hear this, you do not feel sad, but feel connected.

I realized that I was supposed to write songs. I used a lot of my prose in the songs. Writing songs is like making chicken soup, where you have to skim off the fat, and in the end, you have something good. I started writing songs and I felt better. I feel better now. I wanted to write songs that other people would want to hear. I wanted to have a message of hope, that the songs would be helpful. I want to listen to songs that make me feel something and feel connected.

LEM: *Drive All Night* is dedicated to Heidi Marie Lang who died in 1975. Who was Heidi Marie?

Kelly: She was my best friend, and she was a ballerina. I met her when I was thirteen and she told me that she was a dancer, and I was a singer. This was a surprise for me, because in my household I was told that I could not sing, and that I had a terrible voice. Anything that I wanted was taken away from me. Heidi told me about an audition for a Spring Festival at school, and that I should audition, and I did. No one in my entire life had ever helped me before; this was exciting for me. Heidi would listen to the other singers auditioning and would tell me that I would win, and I did. I sang "My Man" by Billie Holiday.

LEM: At thirteen years old, you sang Billie Holiday's "My Man?" Talk about a woman who knows heartache; you chose this song at thirteen?

Kelly: My music teacher chose the song. I practiced so many times that when the time came to sing the song, I was not nervous. When I finished singing, the audience was silent, you could hear a pin drop. Then it just erupted, clapping and screaming, and my parents were there; my father took time off from work.

When we moved to Indiana, Heidi and I kept in touch writing letters and visiting each other at the holidays. The day after Christmas, she was coming to visit me when she was hit by an Amtrak train at the end of my street. She drove seven hours from Ohio to Indiana, and died.

LEM: And your one champion in life died.

Kelly: In *Blood and Bone*, I write that I was saved by my friends, and by ladies. When I was fourteen, I met a lady who owned an antique shop that befriended me and treated me as an adult. She acted like "I knew" so much when I knew absolutely nothing. In addition, Johnny, my boyfriend for fourteen years, helped me. I wrote "Drive All Night" from Johnny's perspective on the night Heidi died, when we just drove.

LEM: Since your decision to record *Drive All Night*, you have been singing and playing acoustic guitar in clubs around New York. How does it feel to be out there singing "Kelly's songs?"

Kelly: I really love it! It is definitely much more meaty for me. I did a DTS show on March 17, 2007, and it was pure fun, it was a blast, but my songs are more of an investment. Right now, I am much more invested in my own stuff. There was a weird phase when I first started out on my own, that I could not talk to the audience which I love to do, but I got over that, and it feels great.

LEM: What is next for Kelly Flint? Is there another release in your creative mind?

Kelly: I am getting better musically. Guitar playing is new for me, too. I played guitar in high school, but I never really learned how to strum. I learned writing songs and playing guitar at the same time. I jump in to things but I am also obsessive about getting it right.

LEM: Will the songs that did not make *Drive All Night* find their way onto your next release?

Kelly: Probably not. I think that there will be a different feeling to the next album.

LEM: Kelly, I wish you the best of success with *Drive All Night*, where you carry the listener on a special journey. Thanks for letting me come along on the ride.

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