



Press

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JETTE-IVES: IN THE DEEP

There's something eerily retro about the mysterious, pale-skinned, dark-haired, blue-eyed Marlene Dietrich-esque beauty standing beside the pensive dark-haired blue-eyed man in the cover art of Jette-Ives' "In the Deep" CD. Starkly enigmatic in black coats in an unknown cold city, they could be a torch singer and her pianist from a past jazz era preserved in candid period photos.

But the music is a startling blend of Holmes Ives's holographic contemporary electronic orchestration fused with robust live upright bass, drums and keyboards, over which the bold, brazen, whimsical, sexy lyrics and vocals of Jette Kelly frolic with precise abandon in the tradition of Nina Simone or Ella Fitzgerald. This is moody, devilish trip-hop, with a bit of tango, plumbing the depths of a woman's psyche and sexuality with raw honesty and lyrical finesse.

At Ova Records studio in northwest DC, Jette Kelly in person, barefoot, in blue jeans and a white shirt, is bright-eyed, warm and vivacious. A chocoholic, Kelly grabs two pieces of chocolate from the fridge before curling up in a chair. Her melodic voice rises and falls in volume and pitch as she speaks, bursting often into musical laughter. She's a chronic insomniac who only slept two hours the night before and apologizes if she sounds spacey.

Kelly, 26, is from Shepherdstown, West Virginia. She remembers being solitary growing up, reading a lot, and being passionate about music and foreign affairs.

"My mom says when I was two, I thought I sounded like Barbra Streisand, but one day, playing with a microphone connected to my stepfather's stereo, he taped me and played it back. I didn't sound at all like Barbara Streisand and it broke my heart," Kelly laughs.

Kelly started taking piano lessons at the age of six and voice at eleven. "I wrote music and sang but I wasn't interested in opera or Broadway. It wasn't until I went to a friend's house and her mother was playing Eva Cassidy singing 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' when I was eleven or twelve, that I went, That's it! She changed everything. It was so raw, yet polished. She had phrasing where every note meant something, she had gigantic range, and every inflection was perfect."

Kelly wrote her first song, a lullaby, when she was 12. As a teen, she says, "I listened to the standard pop stuff other kids were listening to, but mixed with Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Sarah Vaughan, Eva Cassidy. I never wanted to practice piano. I didn't want to play other people's music, even if it was beautiful. I was always writing my own stuff. Eventually my piano teacher said, Why don't you try this? This might suit you. It was 'Bewitched' by Ella Fitzgerald. I loved it, so she kept me stocked with the old blues and jazz classics."

Kelly developed powerful pipes of her own. "I've got to sing every day," she says, and describes what she feels when singing as, "Indefatigable, but at the same time worn out. So strong, so powerful, but so incredibly honest. I never hold anything back."

Kelly met Holmes Ives, world renowned electronic music composer, through mutual friend Derek Miller. Miller threw parties at a Hagerstown, Maryland club and booked Ives to DJ. Miller told Kelly she should come. She recalls, "I desperately wanted to be in the music world. I was getting ready to start a job as a research analyst with the West Virginia House of Delegates and thought, at the ripe old age of 23, I'd missed my chance."

Says Ives, "It was a snowy night, one of my first down tempo gigs. I was playing some of my chill music and

Derek pointed out a girl walking in and said, I have to introduce you - every time she sings, she makes me cry. When I saw her get up to leave, I ran over, gave her my card and said, Derek said we should meet, call or email me, maybe we can get together. Two weeks later she emailed and I didn't know who she was. There was no, I met you in Hagerstown or anything, just, I'm ready to come! I wrote back, I'm really sorry but I don't remember who you are. When she told me, I was like, Oh, yeah!"

In January 2004, the night before Kelly began her new job, Jette-Ives worked together for the first time, initiating their unusual improvisational modus operandi.

Ives says, "I put Jette in the vocal booth and asked her to do some operatic stuff. She put a jazz twist to it which was real interesting. Then I played her something I was working on and told her to just wing it. That turned into our first track, 'Darker Than You,' which is one of the most widely accepted pieces on our album. We really hit it off musically."

Kelly remembers, "I got here, scared to death. I hadn't recorded before and I was terrified. Holmes says, Okay, go in there and do it. I wrote the lyrics sitting here, went in and just sang. A month later he sent me the track and I went, Oh my, that's me and that's him, and Wow! I came back and we did 'Vexed' and 'E' (someone's initial, not a drug reference). We shook hands and said, we think we have an album here so: We're never going to sleep with one another, and we're going to make this album. We kept that deal. It would have been very easy to do something stupid that would ruin everything. We did the album and he's become one of my very best friends. Holmes is my angel. He sheds feathers. He's got the biggest heart."

Says Ives, "Usually I put together a beat and a bassline and some sort of melodic structure. She'd thumb through her journal and find lyrics that might work, preconceiving what might fit rhythmically. Normally she's a one shot genius. Sometimes we'd do more takes, but nine out of ten times we went back to the first recording. The singing part happens within an hour, then I'll work maybe 80 hours to complete the song. Though her job doesn't take as long, it's equally important. We each have our own special gifts and talents we bring to the table."

Kelly says, "It's a weird way of working but it works for us. I liken it to Holmes putting down a nice soft mattress. I sit on it and go, Hmmm, yes, then I lay back, and he covers me with lovely cashmere sheets and blankets and feathery things. We play off one another constantly as friends and creative and business partners. I never dreamed I would be so lucky."

"All the lyrics for 'In the Deep' came from my journals. When I think I can make a connection between music he's written and words I wrote, he'll turn it on, I'll go in the studio. He turns off the lights and it's just me in a little room, singing," says Kelly.

Be forewarned. "My muses are debauchery, solitude, chocolate, lust, really good sex, and love or the absence thereof. As a writer I edit, but I don't edit my emotions. I have a healthy regard for the consequences, but there's no filter," she says.

In a spooky twist, says Kelly, "We wrote and recorded some of these songs before they happened in real life. 'Thin Ice' is the only love song I've ever written. At the time I wrote it I didn't know where I was drawing from. I was listening to Tom Waits's 'Alice.' Every time I listen to 'Alice,' I write. I felt melancholy and in love, but I wasn't. It's a specific story about denial and knowing you cannot do what you are about to do, that you'll have it for one moment, and just as you have it, inevitably you will lose it. I wrote it in ten minutes, recorded it feeling like I sang with my heart in my fist. Six months later, I lived it. It was really weird.

"With 'Proximity,' Holmes asked me to write lyrics for a tango piece. I'm an aspiring tango dancer. I was such a slacker that by the time I wrote it, he'd already had another singer record on it but said, Sure, give it a go. Again I had no idea where it came from. It started at a four-way stop, stuck in traffic, on my way to a bar, with 'careful, sharpened kisses.' I finished it at the bar, recorded it here, then I lived it.

"'Ultimately Darling' I actually wrote after the fact, running away to New York, heartbroken. Holmes called and asked if we could do a cover of Chris Isaak's 'Wicked Game.' Holmes and Matt Lewis, our bassist, wrote this beautiful arrangement. At 4 in the morning, I sang, heartbroken and rather ginned up, so it's very raw. I was very angry for 'Ultimately Darling,' which we did after and we left it unfiltered. It's not always pretty, but I meant everything I said. I had an Eva Cassidy moment; I was there for every note. It's probably my favorite song."

At the end of the CD is a brief unlisted track. "I wrote a poem that summed everything up, like here's where the entire album came from, and named it 'Perfidia' in Spanish, or 'Perfidy,' in English. Holmes asked, Do you want to do a teeny tiny song? He had Amy Dominguez, the cellist, come in. We put it far back on the CD and in the CD art."

"In the Deep" can be found, says Kelly, "near Portishead, the Brazilian Girls, Goldfrapp, Tricky, Sneakerpimps." The CD has been getting indie radio play worldwide and is available for download at iTunes.

In February, ACIDplanet and Experimental Division Nashville hosted a contest for the best remix of "In the Presence of" from "In The Deep." "We got 433 submissions from all over the world! It was amazing. Googling 'Jette-Ives,' we went from 800 hits to 35,000 hits in a month!" says Kelly.

In May, Jette-Ives had the honor of performing with the New World Symphony at a beachfront gala at the Saxony Hotel in Miami. Afterwards Kelly was invited to perform solo and she obliged with blues classic "Ain't No Sunshine," a capella. "I sent Stacey Glassman, director of annual giving, a copy of 'In The Deep,' and she called me and said, You got me, I knew exactly what you were talking about, and she quoted from my song 'Supine.' That was one of the nicest things anyone has ever said to me."

Thievery Corporation's ESL Music recently signed Jette-Ives to its Outernational Sound licensing company, making their songs available for TV, film and advertising.

On October 30, Jette-Ives will perform live at DC9. "People can expect a really intense, fiery show," says Kelly. "United By Sound from San Francisco is a wonderful, fabulously energetic, trippy amalgamation of many music genres, with a great female singer. Our band is Danny Tait on drums, Matt Lewis on upright bass and sometimes guitar, Holmes on keyboards and synths, and we just added Scott Fogelgren, also on keys and synths. It should be a big, rich sound."

Then, says Ives, "We'll be doing lots of East Coast shows including Philly, New York, North Carolina, hopefully Boston." A year from now, he says, "I see us in Europe, probably doing festivals in late summer/ fall." Kelly adds, "I also see us doing buzz band festivals like SXSW."

"We've started on our followup album," says Ives. "I plan to incorporate a live string ensemble. With strings you can harness such powerful emotions, and they go beautifully with the timbre of Jette's voice. Together they just bring you to your knees sometimes."

"We have a lot to say. But it will still be Jette-Ives – moody and pensive and lusty," she grins. |

Kelly is protective of Ives. "Holmes is my hero. He's taught me so much and made me a better person, more patient, more social. From the beginning he put his arms around me and said, Okay, Jette, you're going to say what you've got to say. No one's ever given me that venue to just say it, without filters. It's every artist's dream to have that opportunity and he gave me that. I'll gladly give Holmes to the perfect woman, but she has to be perfect."

