

"Every tune has a mind of its own..."

An interview with Kelly Zirbes

By Paul Bondarovski

KELLY'S LOT IS A LOS ANGELES BAND THAT WEAVES A BLUESY FOLK INFLUENCE WITH A BLUES ROCK foundation. Their diverse collection of original songs is a dynamic mixture of sometimes mellow and moody, sometimes raucous and radiant music and always soul searching lyrics. "Kelly Zirbes is a powerful singer and songwriter," wrote Deborah Keith at GoGirlsMusic.com. "Hand this woman a microphone ... and what you get is a toe-tapping magical moment."

P. B.: Kelly, you know what impresses me the most about you? It's the number of charities that have benefited from your concerts and album sales. It looks like this activity is as much important to you as the music...

Kelly Zirbes: Yes it is. I couldn't choose between the two, because they are part of each other. I try and do as many gigs for charity as I can.

P. B.: Another impressive detail. Contrary to so many bands, your website, your pages at MySpace and Sonicbids are always up-to-date, always contain your latest news and gig schedules. You seem to be a very organized person. Are you?

Kelly Zirbes: In a very mad and crazy way – I am organized! If anyone came into my office, they would *not* think I was organized. I'm a bit of a whirlwind kind of person. I would say my pages are current because of the Nike slogan I try and live by, "Just Do It!"

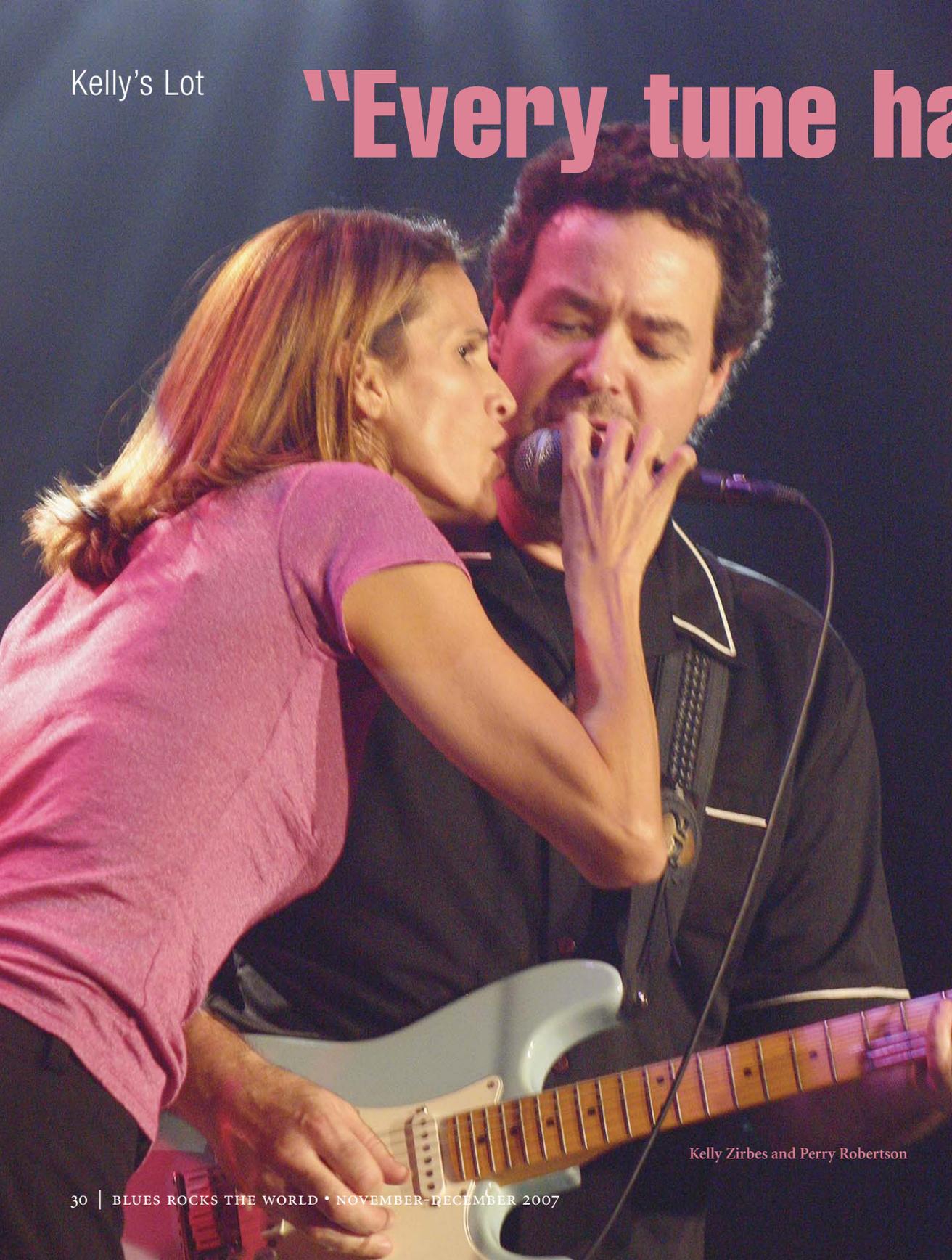
P. B.: You're one of a few singers not saying you've started to sing before you could talk. Your biography begins with ... the first lineup of your band. What were you doing before that?

Kelly Zirbes: I've never been much of a self promoter. I don't really enjoy talking about myself. But here's a little history. I was the third child of a single mother who raised five kids on her own. She loved us to death and worked hard to keep us all happy. I graduated high school with honors and played guitar and sang any chance I could, but mostly for myself and my mom.

I only lasted two years in college and left to become an actress. I did a little modeling and a little acting. After many different jobs, I finally had the nerve to try music. Yes, I was afraid to do the one thing that mattered most! My mom always said I should be singing. Why don't we listen to our mothers? Kelly's Lot was formed around 1995, but we were called "The Ya Ya's." I did my first ever full band gig at The Roxy in Hollywood. It was awesome.

P. B.: Tell me a little more about your band. There were so many lineup changes... Hope it's not because you are so hard to work with!

Kelly Zirbes: I hope not! Actually, I spoil my band. I guess, after twelve years, we haven't had that many changes. I keep in contact with all of the players, except one, and they have all come back at some points to jam. It's always been about their lives changing and needing to focus on something else. That is



Kelly Zirbes and Perry Robertson

Painting by Christine from Germany.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDRA MOLINA



Kelly Zirbes and Mark Drews.

Rob Zucca, Mark Drews and Sebastian Sheehan.



why they are all welcome and are considered honorary band members.

The main band right now is Sebastian Sheehan on drums, Mark Drews on bass, Rob Zucca on guitar, Perry Robertson on guitar, Bill Johnston on Sax, Linda Moss on harmonica and Kelly (that's me) on vocals. We do have lots of backup players who really just want to play with us. We are lucky! I like to give them credit because they are part of the band in my heart... Kelly's Lot is really Kelly Zirbes and Perry Robertson, plus whoever else wants to jam! Does that make sense?

P. B.: Perfectly!... Lyrically, your songs are very personal and suppose a person-to-person communication between you and the listeners. But musically, some of them could easily rock a stadium. What kind (and size) of audience you yourself find the best?

Kelly Zirbes: Would love to play in a stadium! Haven't done that yet. Closest I came was opening for John Mayal at a festival at the Ventura Fair grounds. It was fabulous! I also love theater gigs and pubs!

We are a lively group, so we don't mind playing in a noisy pub. Small intimate places are nice, but sometimes I feel like a bull in a china store. But I'm learning to pull back and be quiet and soft. But come on, who doesn't like to *rawk*!

P. B.: Blues, rock, pop, folk... I'm afraid it would be extremely difficult to label you with any particular genre. But when you write a song, do you start by thinking of it as a blues, rock, pop or folk song?

Kelly Zirbes: Sometime I do say, "I need a blues tune," but that never works. Every tune has a mind of it's own.

P. B.: Kelly's Lot is a band playing almost exclusively your originals. Sure, you could easily go without covers at all, and yet there are some in your repertoire. I suppose there is a special reason in each particular case?

Kelly Zirbes: I really enjoy doing covers. It's just not been a priority in the past... We are getting more gigs where it works to do it.



Corporate type stuff. But they also want to hear our material, which is always good. We all are having fun doing covers, so why not?

P. B.: Music is pleasure, isn't it? But what kind of pleasure for you, emotional or intellectual?

Kelly Zirbes: Emotional – all the way, baby! But it's pleasure *and* pain, and both crucial for one's survival.

P. B.: There is a commonly shared opinion that the purpose of the music is to entertain listeners. When you're singing, are you doing it for the listeners or for yourself?

Kelly Zirbes: To be honest, I do it for myself – to share feelings that the songs bring up in me. But I always hope to bring the audience along for the ride. Once I'm on stage, I find specific people in the audience who inspire me to sing and feel more! Without them all my feelings would stay bottled up inside.

P. B.: Do you consider yourself an entertainer?

Kelly Zirbes: I've been told I am an entertainer. I'm very passionate when I sing. Some say I'm really fun to watch. And yes, I do enjoy entertaining! I like to make folks laugh and cry with me.

P. B.: The meaning of success, what is it for you?

Kelly Zirbes: Wow! That's a hard one. Finding the time to know what makes you happy and doing it is a measure of success. My favorite motto is, "Making a positive difference in someone else's life is Success."

P. B.: Do you imagine yourself doing something quite different in life?

Kelly Zirbes: I never have imagined what I would do. Is that weird?

P. B.: No! Weird would be to just imagine and do nothing!... Now, my favorite pair of questions. What do you esteem the most in people?

Kelly Zirbes: I love empathy. I love when folks try to understand others.

P. B.: And what do you detest in people?

Kelly Zirbes: I hate selfishness. It's good to take care of yourself and to think of yourself,

Kelly and Frankie.



“Kelly Zirbes ... says her time is less important than her charitable agenda. Showcasing her blues-rock band, Kelly’s Lot, and raising awareness of an insidious but little discussed disease, Hepatitis C, are her top priorities.

Zirbes will be one busy lady at the 5K, singing the national anthem, then running the race, and finally, performing with her band at the Finish Line Festival. The Finish Line performance will kick off the band’s tour through seven cities culminating at the Boston Marathon. Kelly’s Lot also helped raise \$10,000 for cancer research at the LA. Marathon two years ago...”

– LA Times, February 26, 2002.

so you can be strong for others. But the constant worrying for your own happiness is not only exhausting but boring!

P. B.: Your song “Back To L.A.” is a real hymn to Los Angeles. I guess there is a kind of “love story” between you and L.A.?

Kelly Zirbes: Yes, I must say I do love Los Angeles. It’s my home, it’s where my family lives ... and it has great weather! What more do

you need? But really, it is where I have been, where I have suffered, where I have smiled, where I live. It’s a place where many come to make a dream happen and a place where a lot of dreams fall apart. It’s sad and it’s quite lonely, but it’s also magic. “Back To L.A.” talks about leaving to find what you lost but realizing you have to go back to find it.

P. B.: There are at least two major upcoming events in your career – a new album and a European tour in May 2008. Can you tell something about the both?

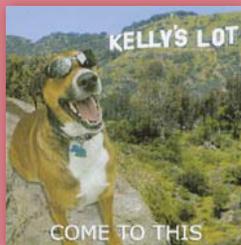
Kelly Zirbes: We are so excited about our next CD. It has been a long time in the making. It is a mix of styles but mostly roadhouse rock and blues. My vocals have a lot more growl than we have had in past recordings. The songs are shorter and less crowded. We have already been offering a couple of tracks on MySpace, because I wanted folks to hear what we are doing.

The tour in Europe has been an idea for about five years and finally we are planning it. I’ve earned lots of European fans through Internet radio in the past few years, so it’s time to go. We are already booked to play Brussels and are working on many more spots! We will be traveling as an acoustic trio with Linda Moss on harmonica, Perry Robertson on guitar and myself on vocals.

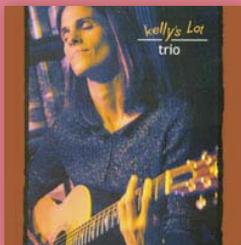


Website: www.kellyslot.com

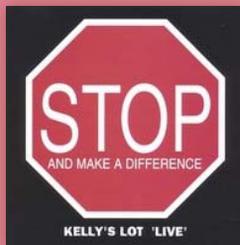
THE KELLY’S LOT DISCOGRAPHY



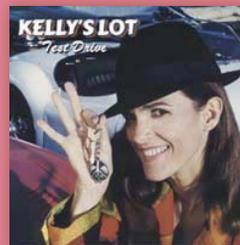
Come To This
(2003, self-release)



Trio
(2003, self-release)



Stop
(2000, self-release)



Test Drive
(1998, self-release)