

# CAITZ 'N' CLAWZ

by Nicky Baldrian

**ALANNAH MYLES** returns to the scene with her super cool brand new album called 'Black Velvet'. The title should ring a bell with you, and for those of you who have been hiding under a rock the last nineteen years, Alannah scored a massive worldwide hit with the song of the same title way back in 1989. Everyone knows 'Black Velvet' but few remember the artist, and it's time to bring people and fans back to speed.

ALANNAH MYLES



Alannah began to sing at a young age: "I picked up my mother's Espana Spanish guitar with a wide neck and taught myself some chords but could not figure out the chords to other artists' songs so I wrote my own," she explains to me. "I was demoing my music by 16. It was punk/country styled ballads and blues rockers. My influences very early on would have been Crosby Stills Nash & Young, The Beatles, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Lovin Spoonful, very early Bee Gees and other folk groups; later I progressed to Neil Young, Linda Ronstadt, Emmy Lou Harris, Little Feat. When I sang covers in bands, performing my own material I was influenced predominantly by the Stones, AC/DC, Chrissie Hynde, Aretha Franklin, Anne Peebles, Creedence Clearwater Revival, 4 Tops, Elvis Costello, T Rex, Bowie. Now I have come full circle and find my influences as a writer in Bob Dylan, Johnnie Cash, Mick Jagger, Peter Gabriel, Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, Crosby Stills Nash & Young, Neil Young, Marvin Gaye, Sara McLaughlin. It's almost as if I have reverted back to my musical beginnings to try and find my original inspirations."

I ask Alannah what was it like landing a contract with a major label (Atlantic/Wea) and how she got the contract?

"Well Nicky, it's not what it was cracked up to be. Though it changed my life I still had budget constraints recording my first record, in a male predominate society of corporate execs with lack of faith in my ability to do the work because I was female. Afterwards, I found myself curtailed from expressing anything that might place me in a position of political power or supersede those that wielded it, financially abused by a company that I had worked my ass off to sell over 150 million US dollars globally but have never seen a red cent of profits from those sales due to recoupment issues. It took a very long time to pass through the victim, then the anger phase of the experience to arrive at a place of collective wisdom."

Alannah worked hard when 'Black Velvet' hit the big time all over the world. "I could hardly remember my name, never mind what city we were in, or what country we were in. A lot of experiences are only coming back to me now, of places I had been and performances I had given. It wasn't a time for me to cave to the excitement of it all. I had to barrel forward, full steam ahead to continue with the death defying workload. I was the little engine that could."

In 1992 Alannah released her second CD 'Rocking Horse' which didn't do as well. "I was entirely disappointed Nicky, especially with the music industry in America and until I could find a way to make it all go away I could not regain control of my own musical destiny, or at least own my own music, after spending years creating and gathering the funds to pay for it."

Alannah doesn't hold fond memories of that time 'although' she says 'life is more forgiving now in the midst of struggle to recreate my career and return to the fans who love my music and have kept me going strong. I will do things allot differently now.'

Several more albums followed: 'Alannah' in 1995,

the excellent 'Arrival' in 1997. Then all went quiet until now. I ask Alannah why she decided to re-record 'Black Velvet' and call the new CD 'Black Velvet'?

"Atlantic Records had a re-recording restriction clause in my seven album contract (with an option for eight) so twelve years and fifteen minutes after the contract was up I took back what belonged to me and recut the song. I intend to recut it several more times while I am still alive. People who remember the title of the song (or not) do not remember my name. It seemed fitting to reclaim my title by familiarising my fans with which it was that sang the song they had made their favourite. By titling my new CD 'Black Velvet' it's plain and simple." This is understandable and rightly so. More power to Alannah.

The new album started life in 2004. Alannah hooked up with her producer Mike Borsky in Toronto and alongside her French assistant producer Veronica Ferraro she played dozens of songs that she had scarcely written to watch their reactions.

"I assigned certain songs to whoever showed most enthusiasm for each song. A few they doubled up on but Mike and I basically handled the bulk of how it was produced. We flew to France to lay down the first tracks, Mike and I returned to Toronto and wrote as we recorded, a very costly procedure that had me seeking bank loans to complete it."

When all the tracks were recorded Alannah called on Terry Brown to mix the CD with her. "It was a labour of love," she proclaims proudly. "We spent three and a half months in his studio in Toronto finessing it with Terry assigning the right mastering facility to create as flawless a recording as possible. I am immensely proud of everyone's hard work and invested time but most of all, the music."

Alannah's inspirations are all depending on the track she is writing or recording. "I do not have any singer I aspire to sounding like. I am very much in touch with my own voice and trust it to give me whatever I need. My music is a very insular process. I live in silence most of the time."

Alannah hopes this time to tour the UK and Europe. "I have missed performing in the UK immensely. I hardly found myself performing there at all given that Brits love 'Black Velvet', the blues and my music so very much. I am planning a fall tour through Europe with a band in Sept and there is rumour to our passing through for a couple of dates in the UK. That would greatly please me! I have always found myself treated with utmost respect by press in the UK."

I ask Alannah how she feels about internet downloading and the whole change within the industry compared to how when she started out back in the late 80's. "There is nothing an artist can do nowadays to prevent piracy with how easy it is to rip and download. A lot of indie artists give their music away because it's more important that they place the songs in the public conscience. The way bands are going to survive is by touring with their music, creating a fan base for their catalogue. Albums will become antiquated like technology due to ipods. Prince has proven himself to be the highest grossing profiteer in the industry, offering his new CDs as a part of the high cost of a live ticket. He has become a frontrunner for greater things to come."

Alannah won't allow herself to make taken advantage of anymore. "I have learned to temper my voracious ego," she laughs, "To enjoy the small wonders I receive from my fans in their continual praise and enjoyment of the music I was born to create. I love what I do, singing is my therapy, and songwriting is where I channel my pain. I am a survivor and I recommend to any young artist that they dig deep to find music as their calling in life before they search for fame and fortune. Fame and fortune for it's own sake will surely take its toll on your soul. No one can beat the fame game, and no one can live in the limelight like a God. Our light needs to burn out so we can become human again. But again I'd like to thank all my fans for what they have given me. For hope, for keeping my music alive and in future I plan not to disappoint firstly anyone or myself who enjoys my music. In the time I have been away I have written enough songs, and poetry, for many more

years of recording. I am ferociously hungry to create more ways to inspire and be inspired. Hey, what about a jazz cover of a Madonna song? Never judge anyone, or any idea. It may come back to slap your face with greatness!!!"

Check out Alannah's new album that is out now via [www.alannahmyles.com](http://www.alannahmyles.com)

ROBIN BROCK



Canada's **ROBIN BROCK** is a name some of you might be familiar with. Robin has already released two well received CDs with the Keith Olsen produced 'Blame It' On Rock and Roll' and 'Hidden Power'. Robin has been singing since an early age, she went through her school years and became a favourite in choir classes and joined her first band at fifteen. She grew up listening to anything from Kiss, Pat Benatar to Elvis and The Eagles and as he grew older she got into Bryan Adams, then Def Leppard, Joe Lynn Turner and Heart "All a huge influence on me," she says.

Robin is the process of recording her third album. "It's not that much different than the last one," she explains. "It's modern melodic/classic rock. The songs are heavier and the guitars are heavier, but it's still very melodic and filled with attitude."

Robin has been recording the songs over a period of time and has been co-writing with John Capek at his studio in Toronto. "I've been financing it myself so it's taking longer than I would like and longer than I planned. The songs are defining moments of my journey over the last few years. 'New Addiction' is about the weight issue I've been struggling with for a very long time, '7 Pieces' is my experience of my mountain bike accident when I broke my ankle in 7 places, 'Fuel' is a song about empowerment and using crappy things that happen to you to motivate you to do great things instead of letting it break you down, 'Monsters' is about all the things we are trying to hide from the world, 'Two Words' was inspired by a meeting with a record executive. 'Power It Through' is about motivation no matter how life sucks sometimes. The rest of the songs haven't revealed themselves completely yet. I have more than twenty-five songs 99% written for the rest of the album but I won't know which ones want to be finished until I get back together with John. It seems like whenever I close a door in my life, whatever song relates to that experience decides to finish itself. The songwriting process on my part has been like pulling teeth. It's been excruciatingly slow, because just when I think a song is finished, I leave it for a bit, then come back to it and try to make it even better. There's been so much editing, but it will be worth it. The songs keep getting better and better; my writing is getting better and better. I am most likely going to release the first six songs as an EP first, possibly summer of this year, just so I can get some music out to the world."

On her first two records Robin was lucky enough to have a wealth of players including Marc LaFrance, Tim Pierce, David Steel, Jeff Pilon and James Kottak. I ask Robin how she got these artists involved. "Circumstance. I was lucky. When we were recording 'Blame It ...' we were looking for some male voices that would compliment my voice on the tracks. We had tried out some female singers and decided it wasn't working, and Mimi, the studio manager suggested Marc and David. It was so incredible to see those two work together. They really added a fullness to the songs. As for Tim and Jeff, when Keith Olsen came on board as producer he suggested Tim along with Jeff and James Kottak as the rhythm section. What an incredibly cool combination. Some of the greatest talent in LA. We had such a blast. I hope one day to have the great Joe Lynn Turner involved. I love the bluesy feel of his voice, which would be a dream."

So for the moment Robin is busy getting things into gear for the summer release. "Finishing the rest of the album is priority," she says. "Then I want to get out there with a killer band to get it to the audiences. I'm

planning on a UK and European tour and I just signed an Asian deal that includes Japan, China and Korea, so there will be touring there too. And I would just like to thank you and the fans so much for standing by me; you're going to love this new album. You won't be disappointed. I promise, I'll see you soon!"

In the mean time, visit [www.robinbrock.com](http://www.robinbrock.com) and [www.myspace.com/robinbrockrocks](http://www.myspace.com/robinbrockrocks)



**MIDNATTSOL** are a fantastic Symphonic Gothic metal band from Germany, led by the amazing Carmen Elise Espenæs who is actually from Norway but moved to Germany back in 2002 in search of a new stage in her life. "I wanted to bring the little melodies that keep circling around in my head to grow up to real songs by instruments as well," says Carmen. "I told my friends and family about my wishes for founding a band, and about the same time Chris Hector (guitars) wanted to put a band together too," she explains. Thanks to friends Carmen and Chris linked up and they realised they had the same visions. After completing the line up with Chris Merzinsky, Daniel Fischer, Daniel Droste and Birgit Ollbrunner the band secured a deal with Napalm Records.

Recently they released their excellent new CD 'Nordlys'. "Our new record invites you to dream," explains bassist Birgitt Ollbrunner. "The new songs are much more complex, playful and diverse than on 'Where Twilight Dwells'. The songs are full of wonderful melodies, which are not all accessible already at the first hearing. It's symphonic but on the basis of melodic. We felt like writing more heavy songs, and also the production sounds much more heavy and natural now. It's just a great flow of music."

All the instruments were recorded at Studio E by Markus Stock in Germany, the vocals at Mastersound Studios in Fellbach and for the mixing the band went to Denmark. "We used Tue Madsen's Antfarm Studio at Aarhus. And for the mastering we flew to Finland to the legendary Finnvox Studio where Mika Jussila did the job. Our aim was to give the music a heavy, warm and assertive sound, where you can also hear the details," says Birgit. "We had a lot of fun. It all took about five weeks and were 100% satisfied with the recordings. It was a very relaxed atmosphere and Markus Stock is a great guy. He is really awesome behind his mixing console and he has a lot of great ideas – everything which accounts for a good producer."

The band are also quite shocked at how much positive reaction they have been getting. "Everything went so fast, we didn't even sit still to fully realise what was and is happening," explains Carmen. "In such a short time we have time to think about the records deal, gigs we played, the amazing people we met, the possibility of making both these albums how we wanted it... it's almost unreal in a way. A good example is the reactions on 'Desolate', which some years ago we put on [www.mp3.de](http://www.mp3.de) and which there were so many downloads that on one day it was the most downloaded song, of the metal songs at least. With other words, the reactions are overwhelming for us, we didn't expect that. If you think about all the professional producers we have already worked with, I think no-one in the band would have thought ten years ago they were going to sit beside Mika Jussila!"

"The fan response also, people using their valuable spare time writing us emails, letters, sending gifts, writing in the guest book, on MySpace, in the forum... some guys even made a French forum special for us. If we could only know how we could thank all these people! At least we hopefully can give them something special with the new album. We actually had the possibility to see some reactions on the new album in the middle of January, with the little release party we had in Germany. I have to say that the reactions changed from totally silent to the screaming of some words I

shouldn't mention here, hehe. I think it was meant in a positive way, hehe....."

Birgit and Carmen hope that fans from all genres of Metal will give their music a chance and that people will listen to it without any prejudices. "Maybe we might attract even more Metal listeners now, as the new CD is even more heavy," says Birgit.

"I hope people will take the time to listen also to the details of the songs. Just have fun when you listen to the songs and that we can give you a great time live," adds Carmen.

"As far as influences are concerned, inspiration draws in a spiritual way," explains Carmen. "Our thoughts, experiences, happenings in life and feelings like frustration, loneliness, anger, sadness, but also happiness, hope and love. With other words, the music of Midnattsol comes from deep within, it's real, it comes from our souls. In fact, that is a very important thing to me when it comes to music, my favourite bands are the ones that I believe, it's kind of real. Last but not least, the Nordic culture, language, but most of all the Nordic nature is a very big part of the inspiration for our music. Many of the songs are about or have a touch from this beautiful, clean, raw, powerful and mystic nature which almost can be seen as another kind of world, a world to which you can escape when you need a break from this grey, unspiritual industrial society."

But the band are vigilant about the industry. Explains Carmen, "You have to be extremely careful about who you trust in this business. I really don't want to scare you guys, but you will not know how many false people there are out there pretending that they were like my best friend, and afterwards they are talking behind you back because they can't stand seeing that you are more 'famous' or that you have more success than them. Who cares about that? Does it make you a better or happier person? To me, believe it or not, it doesn't matter, it is only material. Just be careful, I was naive and even though I got these tips from my dear family, I wasn't that careful and afterwards I got some of the same bad experiences that my sister had. Don't let people grind you down just because they are jealous at you! Believe in yourself and what you, no matter what people say or write. Be true to yourself and your music and your goals."

So on a final note if you're looking for a superb metal album filled with melodic guitars and bombarding symphonic melodies then check out Midnattsol. "We are really excited about your reactions towards the new album, we worked for this so hard, so we hope that we have achieved giving you something special, something magical, melancholic and metal and we hope to see you on the road soon."

Check them out at [www.midnattsol.com](http://www.midnattsol.com) and [www.myspace.com/midnattsolfolk](http://www.myspace.com/midnattsolfolk)



Austrian band **EDENBRIDGE** are about to release their superb, utterly fantastic new CD 'My Earth Dream' via Napalm Records. The album is filled with amazing tracks like 'Undying Devotion', 'Adamantine' and the title track. I hooked up with amazing singer Sabine Edelsbacher and guitarist/keyboard player Lanvall to find out about the new album.

This year the band celebrate at having been recording and touring for ten years. Not many bands around today even last this long in this fickle music industry. 'My Earth Dream' is the bands sixth studio album which will see the band out on a European tour with Rage.

"Our new album," explains Lanvall, "marks the beginning of our co-operation with Napalm Records. For the first time we used a real orchestra, the Czech Film Orchestra which gives the album a very special sound. Then we used seven string guitars tuned down to B flat which makes the overall sound a lot heavier. I think this marks the main differences in the structure of the new album against our others."

Lanvall produced the albums over a two month

period at his own studio, Farpoint Station. For the final mixes they came over to Thin Ice Studio's here in the UK and worked with Karl Groom of Threshold. The band have a new world wide deal Napalm Records now will tour Europe with Rage. "This will see us playing 31 shows all over Europe and continuing with some of our own shows and festival appearances," explains an excited Lanvall.

Over the years Sabine has also been involved as a guest with artists such Tarja Turunen, Candice Night, Missa Mercuria, Power Quest, Gary Hughes, Angra, Expedition Delta to name but a few. "Right now," she says, "I am doing a duet for Micheal Bormann's new album."

I asked Lanvall why they covered the Sheena Easton Bond track 'For Your Eyes Only'? "I am a big James Bond fan, especially the movies with Roger Moore are among my all time faves. One day I listened to the CD with all the title tracks and I got stuck at 'For Your Eyes Only'. This was our one and only cover version so far. I changed the key from G to A flat and integrated heavy guitars and I think the result is great."

Lanvall loves classical composers who mostly inspire his music. "I love Anton Bruckner, Antonin Dvorak and Richard Strauss. In hardrock/metal it's bands like Dream Theater, Threshold, Royal Hunt, Robbie Valentine, Shadow Gallery and Marillion whom I love. I also love soundtracks, artists like Vangelis and of course music from foreign cultures. This results in my love for exotic string instruments. Not to mention a spiritual respect for nature."

Catch Edenbridge on tour with Rage and check out the new CD, it's superb. Visit [www.edenbridge.org](http://www.edenbridge.org)



Over in Germany new rock band **NIKKI PUPPET** have been firing up a storm for themselves with rave reviews for their excellent new CD 'Militant Mother'. I caught up with singer Nicky Gronewold to find out more about the band.

"We've been working together for 3 years," says Nicky. "Christos (guitar) and I played together for years before. Anke (bass) joined the band with us first and half a year later we found our drummer Florentin and the band was born."

'Militant Mother' is a mix of modern songs, mid-tempo songs and hard stuff - female fronted heavy rock. This is actually their second CD with the first being called 'Puppet on a String'. "We wrote 'Militant Mother' together with Anke and Flo after our European tour with Michael Schenker in 2006," explains Nicky. "For your first CD you have the time of your life, for the second one just some months. That's why the first CD is not as hard as the second one. It's not so easy to describe, you have to hear both and feel the difference and development in the band."

Both Nikki Puppet CDs were produced by Herman Frank, who has been guitar player for Victory and Accept. "We recorded it at his Arena 20 Recording Studios in Hannover, Germany. He saw us live in a club one night and after the gig he invited us to his Studio to offer us recording a CD. For Christos and myself this was a dream came true! But our last female bass player and the drummer left the band; they didn't have the time and the energy to start a career. But Christos and I agreed with Herman to record the songs with a studio drummer and then search the right musicians."

"We love to work with Herman, he is awesome and has really good ideas. He gave us the burning sound and he has special ears, hearing everything. Sometimes he helps us to put our compositions in the right way. It's very good to have somebody looking from the outside, who's producer and songwriter. And Herman has much experience and a very big background knowledge about the music business. And it was so much fun! We record some songs just like they are other ideas, and they become totally new songs when we work with Herman. It took one month to record the

CD, after that Herman started the mix and mastering. The only nightmare was the day after the party we gave after finishing the album!" laughs Nicky.

The band has had a favourable mix of press in support of the new CD. "Most of the reviews have been very positive. Especially the new album had some different reviews, caused by our cover version of 'We Didn't Start The Fire' by Billy Joel. It was a surprise for some people that we took this song because it's not from the hardrock or metal genre. We put up the tempo and it sounds a little bit like punkrock, so most of the people like this version but others couldn't believe that we did it. So it caused a bit of a stir. Thinking about the lyrics you find out that the CD is very current, some other songs are critical of the government and our system. But most people like the two girls on stage! So, you have to come see the band live!"

'Militant Mother' has been released by Armageddon Music who are the people behind the Wacken Festival. "Armageddon is a great label. They give you many possibilities to play live and they help you with many things. Our label manager is Sabina Classen from the band Holy Moses, so they're people from our scene and not the 'men in blue', you know what I mean ... musicians who know the score."

During the European tour with MSG Nicky got the impression that the rest of Europe is more open minded for new stuff than Germany. "In our hometown in Hannover there is still an audience for modern Rock 'n' Roll. I hope it grows more and more, but it's definitely more open-minded across Europe."

"We just get out there and be ourselves, have fun. You have to believe in your dreams, stay true, make a concept and definite your aims. Then you can find a platform for your ideas. A producer, and high sound quality is very important, and a record label, for example, that believes in you and your ideas, the internet - myspace.com is a great platform for musicians. And promotion! Very important! Invest into promotion, play live as often as you can, do interviews, give the people a chance to get to know you. Have ideas. Follow your heart and make your own experiences."

Nikki Puppet are a fantastic fun high-energy band. Check them out at [www.myspace.com/nikkipuppet](http://www.myspace.com/nikkipuppet)



**MARY AMORA** was born in the Philippines and started singing when she was little. Later on she started singing more professionally in the bands from her Island of Bohol. She then went to Manila and together with her band they enjoyed trips to The Netherlands and Japan. In the late 90's Mary travelled to Shanghai and started to sing at Charlie's bar in the Holiday Inn Crowne Plaza where she met her husband. Relocating back to The Netherlands, in 2001 Mary won the popular Dutch TV show, 'The Soundmixshow', imitating Tina Turner singing 'River Deep and 'Mountain High'. Then in early 2003 Mary read an advertisement from a composer searching for a singer to participate in the Dutch Eurosong competition. With the song 'Somewhere By The River' Mary reached the finals in Ahoy. One year later she tried again to represent in the Eurosong competition with 'The Power of an Angel', but again wasn't successful. So she then decided it was time to record her own CD. "It always has been a dream for me to try reach the top. How to reach the top is not written down in a book, but I knew that I had to do something," says Mary. So she set about making the record. She didn't actually write any of the songs that made the end product. "I've never been able to write, I'm trying a little bit and getting better, but up to now I could not manage to create a nice song," she explains. "I tried to find more suitable songs to record. After putting an advertisement in the International Songwriters Association magazine I received approximately 200 songs to my home address. We picked approximately 20 songs and started to select a studio. Most songs were written in the UK, one song is written by a Singaporean guy and

the rest are from the Netherlands."

The album was produced by Dutchman Ernst van de Kerckhof and Eddy Bopp from the US. "I worked with Ernst before, in 2003 recording the Eurosong entry for that year. When I was in need for a producer I remembered him and asked if he would like to record and produce my album." But it wasn't all fun and games in the studio. "It was a nightmare. Since I was pretty new in the Netherlands and my husband didn't know anything on music, it was very difficult for us to find the right studio. In fact we recorded most songs on the CD twice, because the first studio didn't produce the CD the way we thought it had to sound. The producer over there made some arrangements for the songs that we didn't like at all. Obviously he was offended and gave the project to his colleague. At first the arrangements of this new producer were okay, but after we recorded all the voices and we heard the final mix, it was very disappointing. After almost nine months hard work we concluded that we had wasted our money and energy. We were about to forget the whole project when I thought about Ernst. Although he was very busy, he saw the challenge and agreed to help me. Early 2005 we started all over again, using whatever useful stuff from the previous recordings. Final mixing was done by mid 2006 and in the autumn of 2006 I finally had my first album in my hands."

And so far the feedback has been very positive with the only downside being that Mary has to release the CD on her own. "The climate in the Netherlands is not that good anymore. Even local artists who actually sell a lot of CD's don't have contracts anymore. A difficult world, but I just love singing so I will continue, but nobody is waiting for Mary Amora or anyone else. You have to do something to get noticed. Besides that you have to have the luck to meet the right people. Believe in yourself and focus on what your good at."

Mary's album 'Long Way' is very good and full of catchy tunes. Check her out at [www.myspace.com/maryamora](http://www.myspace.com/maryamora) for more info.



San Jose's Darcy Andersohn, aka **DAZZ**, grew up on a constant diet of everything from Andy Williams to The Jackson Five. "I listened to the radio continuously, day-in and day-out with my mom, older sister and three younger brothers," explains Dazz. "Dad had a special voice, I would listen to the diversified styles of his records maintained, the wide variety of music I was constantly exposed to as a child influenced and inspired me to create the original unique sound I display as an artist today."

Dazz begun to sing at the age of 13. "I hid a Panasonic cassette recorder and practised singing 'Dreams' by Fleetwood Mac with my sister Nel. Nel recorded the practice session and played it for her band members; they liked what they heard and that was that! Over the next few years, gigging and being on the road in the Summit Road Band left a big impression on me. I was fortunate to obtain my first recording studio experience at Astral Sound in Campbell, California during this period."

Dazz then moved to Hawaii and started an all original rock band called Rare Breed. "I rocked the Island for the next four years as the lead vocalist and co-song writer! Rare Breed headed back to the mainland, found new local band mates and hit the road running! Rare Breed was fortunate enough to open for some great bands such as Pat Travers, Blue Oyster Cult, Robin Trower and Y&T, many of the shows were held up in Oakland, CA at the Omni. Rare Breed recorded a rocking four song EP with the Henry Brothers who had just finished recording Eddie Money's latest project! Rare Breed rocked Hawaii and California hard until I moved on about a decade later."

After years of writing songs Dazz wrote, performed and produced her first solo CD titled 'Letters Never Sent' followed by 'Subtle Driven Confidence' in 2007.

"Subtle will take you on the emotional ride of your life!" she says. "It's packed full of surprises, from the 'temptation torture' displayed in the rocker 'Bad Girl', through the inspirational mellow rocker 'Fade Away' which leads into 'C U Again' which many of my fans refer to as my 'Dazzeppelin' song," she laughs.

The CD was recorded at Soundtek Studios in Campbell, CA. "This time I worked with famous musician/producer Robert Berry. Robert Berry and Thom Duell were my main recording engineers on this project. I produced this album with Robert Berry. One of the coolest things about working with Robert was his natural ability to really 'get' each detail of the vibe I wanted to present. If I wanted Van Halen drums he gave me Halen drums, if I wanted a Geddy Lee bass he gave me a Geddy Lee bass and so on. Robert played 95% of the instruments for me on my album; he is definitely one of the most talented musicians I've ever had the pleasure of meeting and working with, and it was a bittersweet experience. You see, unexpectedly my dad passed away in May of 2007, right when I was about to go into preproduction with my band. Robert was extremely sensitive to my situation and offered to play the instruments for my album, as had not had any time to show my band my new songs. Although I had newly entered the grieving process; I knew my Dad would want me to move forward with my music as he was always so very proud of me and the music I create. When I recorded my vocals for 'Euthanasia', the song I wrote about my Dad's last 10 days on earth, I forewarned Thommy and Bling-E (two of my vocal recording engineers) that I could not guarantee I'd get through the song. I did it in one take, my Dad was with me in spirit the whole time. Boy was it tough, but I did it for my Dad! In spite of the difficult time I was going through emotionally while recording this special album. I've never had such a great recording experience in my life! I started recording in July 2007 and ended mid September 2007. It only took 2 1/2 months to record, mix and master!"

And some of the songs have been played on the radio in France and Germany. "I was ecstatic! I'm happy to say my CD is also receiving airplay in Australia, Canada, and the United States! So far the reception of my CD has been absolutely awesome! I have received several publishing contracts and have been pitching my songs for film, TV and media placement. I have many possibilities in the works and I finally had to hire an Entertainment Lawyer! All in all I'd have to say the reaction has to my music has been totally awesome!"

Dazz isn't being idle either and already writing her next album to be called 'Life Lesson Learned', which is slated for an October 2008 release. So in the meantime check her out at [www.dazzproductions.com](http://www.dazzproductions.com) and [www.sonicbids.com/DAZZ](http://www.sonicbids.com/DAZZ)



Cindy Weichmann, lead singer for Canadian newcomers **NAIL**, has been singing for a long time since she was a kid. "I was lucky enough to be a part of a musical family," explains the lovely Cindy. "Most of my family either sung or played there was always instruments around the house. I became more involved with singing after high school when I joined my first rock band and then I was hooked."

Cindy met Rainer (guitars) in 1982 and the pair have been involved in a number of projects over the years. "Nail has been one of the most rewarding, creatively and musically. Singing has always been my passion, I've always felt that this is what I was meant to do."

The selftitled album from Nail was a labour of love for both Cindy and Rainer. They had the chance to just let it flow and both feel these are strongest songs they have worked on in years. "This album is driving with a lot of energy, in fact there are no tracks one could consider a 'ballad', it's all pretty much in your face from start to finish."

Rhino (Rainer Wiechmann) produced the CD at Mole studios. "He has worked with a lot of the local

rock groups over the years, in varying capacities as engineer/producer for Kittie, Thine Eyes Bleed, Blood of Christ and many others. The last two Helix albums were also recorded at Mole Studios." The reaction to NAIL has been very good. "We have had very positive feedback so far! Since the release in late October 2007. The CD has been listed in several 'writer's choice' forums such as # 5 in the Sweden Rock Magazine for top 10 best albums of 2007, plus we have had an overwhelming response from our fans and media, with requests coming in everyday from radio stations all over the US, UK and Europe. We are very excited and look forward to the future."

The band have released the CD independently on their own label Mole Records. "We are currently hoping for a distribution deal but as for having a major record label behind us we are able to do what we do without their backing, so far. For the time being, the CD and other 'NAIL gear' is only available through our website at [www.nailband.com](http://www.nailband.com). Being owners of a recording studio allows us to record without incurring the cost of owing some major label money and I personally like it that way. We are also able to record what we want when we want and not have someone tell us who we should be. I'm very happy being an independent artist. Rhino and I have released a few indie albums in the past with other projects and we have always been able to be true to our fans and ourselves. There's nothing better than having your fans tell you they enjoy your tunes and knowing that the tunes reflect you as an artist."

Cindy doesn't rule out shows for the band either. "We are currently in rehearsal with our new bassist, and gearing up for some shows this coming summer. As you can probably tell, the music of NAIL is best suited to larger venues, festival stages, etc and although we are a new band, we see ourselves as a concert group right out of the gate. The focus is on securing dates that will allow us to present the kind of show our audience will expect from us, so it's unlikely that we will be seen at a bar near you anytime soon. Ideally, this is where some label support might make the difference. It would simplify the process of getting on a bill as support for an established act, and make some doors easier to open, but the industry as a whole is changing rapidly and rules are made to be broken or simply don't apply anymore."

"The music business is a very bumpy road, you may have a lot of ups and downs along the way but if in your heart you truly love what you do, simply, DO IT. I've met a lot of people over the years, and even today, who have told me I should be singing a different style of music because of my age or simply because I'm a woman ... that maybe I should sing country or something where women are more accepted. You know what I say? 'FOAD', just like track 11. I say just do what you believe and enjoy, never take other peoples criticisms too seriously, not everyone is going like what you do. Work hard and play even harder, someone will notice."

Nail are a fantastic band check them out at the link above and via [www.myspace.com/nailtheband](http://www.myspace.com/nailtheband)

Finnish guitar player Lars Eric Mattsson started out as a bass player but found that too restrictive in terms of composition, so he turned to the guitar and gigged hard. Lars was discovered by Sharpnel boss Mike Varney back in 1985 and recorded and released a 4 track vinyl EP 'Can't Go On Without Your Love' in 1987. Later Lars signed to Black Dragon Records and recorded 3 albums: 'Eternity', 'No Surrender' and the all-instrumental 'Electric Voodoo'.

In 1992 he teamed up with Swedish singer Conny Lind (State Of Mind) and formed a band with called Vision that did very well over in Japan and was released in Europe through Roadrunner. Next Lars worked with Swedish singer Bjorn Lodin from the band Baltimore and they recorded the 'Astral Groove' album. Returning to Vision Lars recorded the bands second CD 'Till the End of Time' which was his most laid back melodic/AOR release ever. The album got very good reactions. Lars went back into the studio in 1997 and recorded 'Obsession' before working on his next album in 1999 which featured the likes of Patrick Rondat and Erik Norlander. This album was 'Another Dimension' Next up came a progressive band called Conditioned Red with keyboard maestro Derek Sherinian (ex- Alice Cooper/Dream Theater) and Alex Masi (on additional guitars). This was followed by 'Power Games' with ex Balance Of Power singer Lance King and a new super



group called Book Of Reflection which included singer Andy Engberg (ex-Lion's Share) and Vitalij Kuprij. Lars' biggest challenge was the progressive metal concept album/metal opera 'WAR' in 2005 and which features Mark Boals, Vitalij Kuprij, Lance King, Rene Janssen, Benny Jansson. In 2006 came another all instrumental guitar album called 'Earthbound' and that brings us up to 2008 with the release of new the new album called 'Dream Child' which features amazing female singer **ADRIENN ANTAL**.

"'Dream Child' is my most mature and well structured album," explains Lars. "It's very much song-based and the vocals of Adrienn Antal is what makes it so special. The music is symphonic metal with influences of progressive, gothic and ethnic music. The sound is very different due to the domination strings and choir etc."

'Dream Child' took about 15 months to record. "We have put an enormous amount of work into this baby. The songwriting was easy but recording, arranging and mixing was very tough. I have never done anything big as this before with lots of instruments like flutes, woodwinds, violins, accordion etc." Lars met Adrienn by pure luck and was instantly hooked by her voice. "There are many decent singers but not many of this quality, and besides she is very nice to work with. She is a great musician and always seems to understand what I have in mind musically."

I ask Lars after so many years in the business what keeps him motivated? "I guess I have my own niche so to say but this is not music for the big masses. I have developed over the years and have no interest in doing the same music every time. I think my recent stuff is the best I have done and so do most of my fans think. I write music I enjoy and I always challenge myself - this is the best way to keep myself motivated. I guess it has never been more fun than now to make music."

As well as a writing and performing Lars is also behind Lion Music and he is very aware of how downloading is killing the music. "File sharing is killing the business and there will be far less labels and releases in the future. All the musicians will get far less money and most will have to invest money that will never be returned into their careers in order to have an album out. The music magazines will get far less money from advertising, studios will have far fewer clients etc. We risk ending up in a situation where the labels can only sell old bands and no one will be willing in investing in new acts. Lion Music will continue but the times are changing and so will we. I could write a book on it and the industry as a whole, but I am sure there are people out there who would kill me to prevent this from happening. There are no big secrets - it's just a world full of criminals. Lots of people begging to be ripped off, but really, only a fool would consider getting into this field today so my recommendation would be 'don't do it.'"

We wrote about Adrienn aka **ADRYA** a few issues ago. Her family and schoolteachers told Adrienn at a very young age that she has a crystal clear voice and excellent hearing for music. "I took piano and solfeggio lessons and I started to sing seriously in my late high school years," she explains. "I also wrote songs. I spent the following few years with participating in bands, either as a singer or a keyboard player/background vocalist, but I didn't feel at home in any of them. So I decided to walk my own path and put some new songs together, featuring a legendary Hungarian guitarist. I got really good feedback on the demo saying it sounds very unique so I would like to follow this direction in the future as well."

Adrienn is very happy with 'Dream Child'. "I think it really differs from all metal and rock albums being released these days. The basic style is melodic progressive metal. However, not only does it have a special Scandinavian, dark and 'cold' sound but also it contains many gothic and ethereal elements as well that creates a very interesting atmosphere. The songs

move on a wide emotional scale, there are both heavy and soft themes. Thanks to Lars' crazy guitar and keyboard solos which divide the vocal parts from each other. The Astral Orchestra did an outstanding job on the symphonic arrangements that perfectly melt into the music. I think it's gonna be a very exciting musical journey for the listeners."

Adrienn is inspired by musically by singers like Glenn Hughes, Yes, Ann Wilson and Depeche Mode for their special dark atmosphere and sound. "Spiritually, I would like to emphasise a Hungarian author called Maria Szepes whose books contain quintessential stream of wisdom written in a unique way. I hope these writings will get to more and more people in the world."

Check out [www.lionmusic.com](http://www.lionmusic.com) for more info and Adrya at [www.myspace.com/adryamusic](http://www.myspace.com/adryamusic)



**GINA STONE** started out as a vocalist and songwriter for a band called Prospex, a small local band gigging around the South East London area. A few years later Gina formed Scarlette. "We were a hard rock band with a pop edge, myself and Chris Charles wrote the songs. We gigged a little around the London area, playing various pubs and clubs and the Marquee. Eventually changing our name to Black Bone Fever. In the end it seemed harder and harder to get gigs, the live scene was virtually non-existent, places closing down, being knocked down or burnt down! So I left the band to pursue my other love, which is writing."

Gina decided to record a demo CD with the purpose of finding musicians to form a band. "It was recorded at Tabby Road Studios, Swinderby, Lincolnshire. Phil Aldridge (Illegal Eagles) helped with mixing and played drums for me. Chris Childs (Thunder, Illegal Eagles) played bass and all guitars. It was recorded in two days."

Debbie Harry heavily influences Gina. "Her clarity of voice and beauty, but also Chrissie Hynde with her velvet vocals and hard attitude inspires me. Likewise for John Lydon for just being himself, Alice Cooper for his horror and humour, Pat Benetar for her amazing vocal range, Gerard Way for his vocal style, lyrics and positive attitude, Justin Currie for his piercing and honest lyrics and Mike Monroe for his energetic performances."

Gina started to sing when she was eight years old. "I was always singing and dancing in my bedroom, as you do! Being a bit of a shy and moody teenager, it wasn't always obvious to the people around me that I wanted to sing. So it may have been a bit of a surprise to some, but it's something I've always enjoyed doing, and if you enjoy it do it, get out there, be true to yourself and don't let others grind you down! Just dance, have fun and enjoy the music!"

Check Gina out at [www.myspace.com/ginastone13](http://www.myspace.com/ginastone13)



Russian leading lady **LEANDRA** recently released her excellent new album 'Metamorphine' through Drakkar/Sony BMG. I caught up with her to find out more about the album and all things past and present. Leandra started to play piano at an early age and was sent to music school where the teachers forced her to

take part in piano competitions. "I was nine I wrote my first classical piece and won a first prize in a composition competition in Belarus - a junior stipendia at the music academy," recalls Leandra. She then arrived in Germany at the age of twelve and continued to study as well as learning to play guitar. During this time she launched an all girl band called 'Riot-Grrrr!'. "Grunge was big at the time," she says. "We were influenced by Hole, L7 and Babes In Toyland and I screamed my lungs out like never before. These were my first steps in 'modern' music."

Leandra went through various other bands and projects over the years before arriving where we are today with her new album 'Metamorphine'. "I only allow extremely intensive moments in my life to inspire me. I don't wake up in the morning, sit down with a cup of coffee in front of my PC and work out some song concepts - I just write down what comes to my mind as a soundtrack of these moments - it's like a kind of a diary. It happens very often, for my perception is very sensitive and constantly overloaded. The one-to-one-realisation of these soundtracks took only one month. I recorded and produced them on my own at my studio,



always being in connection with Oli, the guitarist of Letzte Instanz. He had the function of a 'brain-to-midi-converter' when my own was out of order and helped me with some programming and the mix."

Like many her influences are not restricted to just music. "The wind, the rain, tragedy, love, my cats and my hatred for the people outside. But if we draw the circle tighter I'm influenced by so many things not just music, it all builds into my own circle."

I ask Leandra her views on downloading. "It's ambivalent: on the one hand I've seen lots of indie labels declaring themselves bankrupt, the blooming economy measures of the majors and their effects on the artists' budgets, on the other hand I never was up to be a commercial sensation and in principle I like the idea of music that is affordable to everyone. By the way newest researches about the music industry signify an alarmingly extreme regression of the profit by so called 'superstars' but instead an increase of sold niche products. So perhaps this new development leads to an equal allocation of musical taste."

**THE VENUS MISSION** come out of Memphis. The band original started out as an 80s party band, playing regional festivals, clubs, casinos, and private parties. They then got spotted by a British talent scout saw the band performing in a club Memphis and suggested that the band write original music. After writing for a year the band recorded a demo with Grammy winner Chris Trevett (Britney Spears, Backstreet Boys, Erykah Badu, etc.). The response was uniformly positive, so they continued writing and recorded more songs with Niko Lyras. The end result is 'Body Rockin' which came out last year and has been very well received by a wide range in the bands region.

"It's a straight-ahead, female-oriented pop album," says singer C.C. "We tried to create a contemporary, fun sound with an 80's feel. Several songs always pack area dance floors. We also included covers of three cool 80's songs, 'Obsession', 'Give Me Back My Man', and 'Only the Lonely', and seems to be working for us. The recording of the CD was relatively painless and somewhat tedious, but working with professionals like Chris and Niko was something we never expected and will never forget. Here we are, a hard working local party band, and suddenly we're working with Grammy winning producers who want to record our music. Since we all had full time jobs and a busy live performance calendar, it was sometimes hard to co-ordinate schedules, so most of the recording took place on evenings and weekends.' The band perform around three gigs a week to support the release and are inspired by the likes of Stevie Nicks, Tina Turner, Fiona Apple and Bruce Springsteen.



"I've learned that you should never give up and, no matter what anyone tells you, always believe in yourself," says Izzie B. "You never know when someone listening out there will fall in love with your music and be truly inspired by you!

"In Memphis," continues Trixie6, "I'm often lucky enough to gig with guys who actually created the great hits from Sun and Stax, so I keep my eyes and ears open and try to keep learning. Aside from some shocking stories, I've learned a lot about professionalism, teamwork, and harmonies."

"The only way to get where you want to be - or closer to it - is to take risks," says C.C. "People will criticise, but I've learned not to take it personally, because everyone will have an opinion. just do what you do and go for it."

Check out The Venus Mission at [www.myspace.com/thevenusmission](http://www.myspace.com/thevenusmission)

**TULAR** are a new metal/rock band from Italy who has just signed with Renaissance Records. The band are led by Francesca Martini who has always been surrounded by music thank to her father who was always a great music collector from Tori Amos to Genesis to Jazz. After years of studying Francesca finally got a band going and is about to unleash their debut CD 'The Truth Behind the Mask'. "It's our first album," says an excited Francesca. "We recorded it at Euterpe Studio in Rome over a two year period and Emanuele Palmieri our guitar player produced the entire album."

The band wanted a sound that was genuine and uniquely their own, and they achieved it. "The question about inspiration is a little complicated," explains Emanuele, "but perhaps our name can well explain. Tular is an ancient Etruscan word that means borderline, and in this case it is a line between the real world and the world of fantasy and imagination. Our songs are about everyday life, but seen from a different world in which everything is possible, such as meeting a vampire or an angel, dancing with the Queen of Faeries and so on. For example, 'Witch!' is the story of a resurrected witch, but is also a song about victims of prejudice which unfortunately happens everyday all over the world for every reason."

Over the last few years, Rome has seen a number of new bands cropping and getting attention including Tysnaden and Skylark. Francesca is well aware of the hard work ahead in promoting the new album and hopes to bring the band to the UK. "The UK is a major music market that we are very eager to get to. Having shows in the UK is almost a compulsory step for a band that wants to grow. We are looking forward to international touring."

"I guess without the internet we would have never been on your pages in such a short amount of time," says Francesca. For the future Tular will continue to create even more exciting music, "And we're gonna tour and let people enter Tular's world. To our fans I want to say 'thanks,' because the music industry is hard, but with their support the journey becomes easier and more enjoyable."

Tular are an excellent band. Check them out at [www.myspace.com/tularofficial](http://www.myspace.com/tularofficial)

Fiona McKeown gets to chat with pop/rock icon **JUICE NEWTON**. There are a number of people who have made the cross over from Country to Pop or vice versa but very few do it successfully or with any long-term success. Juice Newton has carved a niche for herself and been in the business since 1975. Born Judy Kay Newton in Lakehurst, New Jersey, she is better known as Juice Newton, the Country, Pop and Rock singer and guitarist. Juice has won over five Grammy's, had fifteen top ten singles, several platinum and gold records, and numerous awards and she is very proud of them all.

In the early 1970's, Juice, Tom Kealey and Otha

Young formed Juice Newton and the Silver Spur band after Juice and Otha met in Los Gatos. "We hit it off as friends and found that we worked together extremely well musically," explains Juice. They first played together in Los Gatos and formed various bands and entertained there locally in what was a very rich club scene. They also met Tom Kealey in Los Gatos and he joined the band. "It worked well as a group, nice vocals, interesting guitar work. There was a big country-folk wave hitting the SF Bay Area at that time. Linda Ronstadt and the Eagles were on the top of the charts, and they had a huge influence on what we wrote and learned. Eventually the band broke out of our small town shell and migrated to LA."

After a couple of years they finally landed a contract with RCA. "Those were fun, exciting times, both in Los Gatos and LA. In LA we'd hang out at the world famous Palamino Club and worked for years at a nice little club called Jasons in Burbank. It was surrounded by movie studios and it was exciting meeting the movie people, both the stars and the ones behind the scenes."

In 1977 Juice signed to Capitol records and went solo in 1978 and had a gold single called 'It's a Heart-



ache'. This was also the year that The Carpenters recorded the top ten country chart hit 'Sweet, Sweet Smile' single which she co-wrote with Otha Young. I asked Juice how she got involved with The Carpenters? "The Carpenters were clients of our original manager, Ed Leffler (Van Halen manager). He played the song for them and they instantly wanted to cut it, and it became their first country hit."

Juice has worked with countless people over the years. She cites Willie Nelson, Melissa Manchester, Dolly Parton, The Carpenters, The Pointer Sisters, Hank Williams, Jr. and Collin Raye as being some of the favourite artists she has worked with. Juice has a powerful voice; even today her voice is still strong on and off record. I ask Juice where she gets her power from. "My voice is a gift from God that keeps on giving and for which I'm always thankful. It's just something that almost always comes out when I call on it, hopefully it will be there for me for a while longer. I try to take good care of it by warming up before I sing. I'm very disciplined in that one thing in my life and career, because without my voice, I'd be lost."

Yes you mention warming up. You look fantastic, what is your typical keep fit routine? "Photoshop! Just Kidding Fiona," laughs Juice. "At home and when I'm on the road I watch what I eat and I run when I can. I've been been a runner for many years. When I'm home I ride horses regularly when I'm home. I try my best to live a healthy lifestyle but it's difficult when you're on the road as much as we are."

I find that your songs overflow with emotion that you can feel with your heart, how do you make that happen? And what are your biggest influences and inspirations? "You're very kind to say that Fiona, since finding motivation for songs can be the most difficult step to really delivering a song. I just try putting myself inside the song and lyric and letting take me to that very place that I'm singing about. As I matured and began learning to find my own voice, I was heavily influenced by Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Linda Ronstadt, Patsy Cline, the Beatles, of course, and many, many others. There was also a heavy folk influence in the beach areas around New Jersey and Virginia, I met Emmy Lou Harris there and we sang at the same clubs around Virginia Beach."

Over the years you took time out to bring up your children, have any followed in your musical footsteps? "My kids are in college, and I've brought them on tours over the years. Luckily none of them have taken up music," she laughs. "They've flirted with it, my son plays drums and my daughter has a lovely voice, but neither seem too taken by the constant demand of travel a career in music can require."

I go on to tell Juice how much I adore 'Angel of the Morning' and 'Queen of Hearts', and I tell her she sings them like she has just written them. At gigs she sings the hits, plus new songs to please everyone. I ask Juice how important is it trying new ground and offering new material? "As much as I love my hits and will never tire of singing most of them, it's critical for an artist to incorporate new material into their repertoire. We try to bring in new songs when we feel they've evolved, arrangement-wise, to a place where they sound as engaging as the hits, so the audience isn't bored with unfamiliar material. I'm always mindful that the fans have come to hear the songs they've heard you sing over the years and so I try to give them as many as time allows, but I like to throw a new one in now and then just for my own creativity and to spice up the show."

Juice also had a track written for her by the great Freddie Mercury (Queen) called 'The Trouble With Angels'. I ask her if she ever met him? "Unfortunately, I never met Freddie Mercury, though I've admired his work for decades."

Juice's new CD 'American Girl Vol 2' is out now. Check her out at [www.juiceweston.com](http://www.juiceweston.com)

**QNTAL** come from Germany and recently released their new CD 'VI - Translucida'. Singers Syrah and Michael Popp lead the band. Influenced by classical and medieval music the band shows a wealth of influences. "Qntal," explains Syrah, "Is about exotic as the chants of Pygmies of Central Africa or of the Inuits in the Polar region. That's why we were interested in Gregorian chant, Troubadours and so on as well as in the chants of the Pygmies. Luckily we decided to follow the medieval road and did not intensify our efforts to imitate the birds of the jungle, which is basically what the Pygmies do, haha."

The new album from Qntal is believed to be the first in the world to combine medieval and electronic music. "We discovered a certain relation between these two different genres. We use different styles of electro-music. There is lot of freedom in our working process. The lyrics are always original from medieval - sometimes baroque - times."

The band have been getting good press too. "We have different styles in our music, there is always somebody who wants more of this and less of that or viceverse." One point of reference is Dead Can Dance, a band I have loved for many years, and Syrah also admits to DCD being a huge influence on Qntal. "We adore them, however we are very open minded concerning different musical styles. For example I like to



listen and to sing, as well which is a very intense and also very special musically. Sometimes I find the typical German medieval bagpipe sound a little bit boring, but sometimes I enjoy it when I hear it live."

Singing has always been an avenue for Syrah to express herself. "At a certain point in my life the need to express myself through singing became very strong. It was really very early in my life, so I can't really tell anymore how it was exactly."

The band earlier on was really an underground act. "No business was involved," she explains. "We had limited equipment and so on. But we made the new; the electronic part is again very important and dominates the 'original' medieval aspect. All the same, the number of synthesizers is quite limited. Some people say that it is a quiet CD, but that's only because they didn't take their time to listen to the whole record. The music has different aspects: poetical, lyrical songs, harder electronics, fast tempo, acoustic elements, and a kind of orchestral arrangements. These are the sources we take our inspirations from."

Qntal are currently touring which will take them out to the USA for a summer tour, when this is over

the band will start to make a new CD. In the meantime check them out at [www.qntal.de](http://www.qntal.de)

Toronto's HUNTER VALENTINE have just released their debut CD 'The Impatient Romantic'. I caught up with the lovely Kiyomi McCloskey to find out more about HV. Kiyomi started singing after she took guitar lessons at school, and although she had a strict teacher which caused her to quit, music crept back into her soul and within a year she was being taught by a new teacher who this time encouraged her. "He was more of an artist and really big on song-writing and that intrigued me a hell of a lot more than learning C scales," she explains. "He always played songs that he had just written at the end of our lessons and one day I went home and tried writing one myself. From there I was hooked and started playing acoustic solo shows all around Toronto."

Hunter Valentine's debut album is a straight-ahead rock record and has some fantastic songs like 'Break



This', 'My Private Battle' and 'Wait And See'. "When you take away the grit there is an underlying melodic pretty side to it to the album," says Kiyomi. The media reaction to HV has also been pretty positive. "Our fans are really supportive and it's nice to have that. We try and stay in contact and really understand whom we are playing to. It's interesting to hear what each individual takes away from your music and definitely inspires me to keep writing. When I hear from someone that the record helped get them through a horrible relationship or rough time in their life it pushes me to keep doing it."

Kiyomi is inspired by everything from the lyrics of John K. Samson to Kings Of Leon and Pema Chodron a teacher of mediation and spiritual awareness. Her musical journey came to life when growing up. "I never thought I could do it. I was an insane music listener and I think I started singing by singing along to whatever I was obsessed with in my bedroom," she laughs. "Once I started writing songs someone needed to sing them and I wasn't good enough to play with people yet, so I took the job."

Hunter Valentine continue to tour around Canada and will be heading as far as New York for show. The band are also shooting a video and are writing their next record. Check them out at [www.myspace.com/huntervalentine](http://www.myspace.com/huntervalentine)

Out of my hometown of Swansea, South Wales, comes an excellent new find. The band is REBECCA RIOT and they rock. Lucie Rees has always sung. She grew up listening to Janis Joplin, Bonnie Tyler, Meat Loaf etc. "As I got older I went through phases as most kids do but always came back to anything 70's/80's blues rock inspired," she says. Lucie is joined by partner Jon Sudbury who as you read this will be recording a new CD with one Mel C. Not exactly rock, but a good coup for Jon nonetheless. This doesn't stop Rebecca Riot from being a priority though. All the songs were written and produced by Jon and he hopes the band will have full CD ready to go by the summer.

"I love our music," says an excited Lucie. "Jon does all of the writing but I do throw my two pence worth in now and again. I think it's important that you enjoy what you produce. If it's not 100% what you want, then firstly you haven't put enough effort into it and secondly you won't have enough faith in it to promote the ass off it. I really like the idea of having 'classic' rock songs with strong female vocals. Loads of bands have the same view but it's weird how it really doesn't work for that many female rock artists in the long term. I think to be honest some female vocals sound a bit whiny. We're trying our damndest to stay away from that needy, pathetic sound and just deliver damn good rock songs! Hell, I adore Whitesnake so expect some blues swagger too."

There is a lot happening on the music scene in Swansea. Not only are we getting more and more in-

ternational bands playing here thanks to our club Sin City, which opened last year, but there's a wealth of acts from here, from the mega successful The Storys through to Vikki Van Zant, Orange Fall, the just signed Lethargy, and This River to name a few who are constantly out and about gigging.

"It's very healthy at the moment thanks to venues like Sin City, Milkwood Jam and the Brangwyn Hall getting in big name bands (Skid Row, Dropkick Murphy's, White Lion)," agrees Lucie.

"I don't get out to see many local bands cos I'm usually gigging myself, although I do try when I'm home! And there are a few goodies around," says Jon.

"We're quite good mates with Steve and Andy from Killing For Company too," chips in Lucie, "although we haven't seen them play for a while - hi Guys! They're a pretty good band though and a hell of a laugh!"

Jon is pretty busy working with singer Lianne Morgan, who was originally in the Spice Girls. "I know, I know," he grins, but check out [www.liannemorgan.co.uk](http://www.liannemorgan.co.uk) for the full story. "We're working with producer Greg Haver who produced Manic Street Preachers, Lost Prophets, Bullet For My Valentine etc and recording a full length CD at the moment which I'm playing guitars on. Also I'm playing with UK Guns N Roses [a successful tribute band] most weekends. We're planning on getting Rebecca Riot off the ground for around October with live shows."

"Yeah, I can't wait to be on a stage near you!" Lucie chirps.

Jon feels that the internet is the most brilliant marketing tool for music ever. "Something needs to be done about illegal downloading of songs and the like. Artists need to make a living, but on the other hand sites such as Myspace are fantastic. I mean, there are people in California that have heard our music. There are people in Australia, Japan, France, Italy and some places that I've never heard of that have heard our music. They like it and can buy and download it, right now. Brilliant! You couldn't do this ten years ago, no wonder the record labels are having a hard time," he laughs. And it's so true how powerful the internet is. I mean if it weren't for Myspace I would have not found Rebecca Riot and they only live 8 miles away from me. "Can you imagine trying to get that much exposure, even fifteen years ago, without the backing of a major record company? Impossible," says Jon. "The downside is, of course, that everyone and their dog has a PC these days, so everyone's a rock star in their own living room and they're all uploading stuff that's not necessarily worth listening to, which means that you've got to wade through more rubbish to find the good stuff ...but it is there! And it'll take you a lot of plugging and work to get anywhere, but it never was easy to 'make it' in the music biz, so I'm not whinging about it, I'm just going to get on with it! The hardest thing about being a new band is the sheer number of bands on the internet now, people are bombarded by so much music it's hard to get people to listen in the first instance, but if you can get their attention to start with you're halfway there, and the feedback we've had from the recordings so far is very positive. There's a big market for 'classic' sounding rock music, and with a bit more marketing from ourselves I reckon we can fit in, shift some CDs and play some good gigs."

"I'm still finding my feet at the moment," says Lucie. "I've been in a couple of bands before but nothing on the scale that Jon has. I can't be doing with lazy musicians though, if you're gonna put in the practice to learn to play your instrument, to get yourself to a standard whereby you are recordable and sellable, or you're gigging regularly, don't be slack. Just because people listened to you in the first place doesn't mean they'll keep on listening, you have to keep coming up with the goods every time and not be afraid to work hard for what you want. Chances are that if you like your stuff, other people will too, so hard work and perseverance is the key. It's also important to have fun and not take yourself too seriously."

Rebecca Riot are a cracking band, check them out at [www.myspace.com/rebeccariotmusic](http://www.myspace.com/rebeccariotmusic)