

# Kelly Love Jones

## Loves Playing The Music Of Americana

By Anita Oubre



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A powerhouse of talent, Kelly Love Jones is an international recording artist, musician, guitarist/ multi-instrumentalist, producer, songwriter and storyteller from New Orleans. Her music reaches people from all ages, genders and ethnicities. Her music has been called “Americana” a term that was defined by the Americana Music Association (AMA) in 2020 as the rich threads of country, folk, blues, soul, bluegrass, gospel and rock.

“I describe Americana as folk music; storytelling music. All of my musical influences come together in my work, those New Orleans rhythms, Reggae, Hip Hop, as well as international sounds. You could call it an urban folk vibe,” Kelly explained.

Kelly composes her songs mainly on guitar. A typical day for her starts with meditation, affirmations and getting outside for walks in the fresh air. “My music is my passion and all the songs I do are original. First comes the music. I listen to sounds and rhythms for inspiration and then I come up with a melody and chorus. There is the intention of the song first and then the storytelling comes. A writer has to learn to surrender to the music.”

When listening to the music of Kelly Love Jones, her voice could be that of someone from another country and the influences from her many travels abroad



are distinct in her sound. However, when speaking to Kelly she is so New Orleans and that dialect is as strong as it is beautiful.

Kelly grew up in New Orleans East near the now-defunct Lake Forest Plaza mall. She attended Cabrini High School until her senior year when she moved to Atlanta to live with her father. Kelly was surrounded by a creative and nurturing family. Her parents loved music and her mother (who is her self-described “best friend”) sang. Her siblings were also creative types in the visual arts.

It was in Atlanta that Kelly befriended a group that was into Hip Hop. She loved rapping freestyle. “I incorporated singing and playing an instrument with my rapping and we started a group called Understatement,” Kelly recalled.

A pivotal time for Kelly came when her Aunt Troy (Troy Lynn McGee) put a guitar in her hand. “This guitar was the only thing that survived a flood and she gifted it to me,” Kelly said. “My aunt was a huge influence on me. She was an opera singer and she played the harp so beautifully. I took classical guitar lessons and the discipline was frustrating at times but soon it became my passion.”

Kelly attended Georgia Southern University for a year and then The Art Institute of Houston where she received a degree in videography. Her school of

training came from working on Bourbon Street at Storyville District, a jazz club where Kelly was like a sponge absorbing every aspect of the business alongside Quint Davis and Reggie Toussaint. “I was setting up sound and meeting all the local greats like Irma Thomas, Wanda Rouzan and George Porter Jr. and he eventually had me opening for him.”

It was an exciting time for Kelly who had a keen eye for learning and an ear for the music as she did stage management and engineering nightly. “It was an incredible time,” she said. “I was working alongside all these great New Orleans talents and starting to come into my own. I started working with James Alsanders who was a drummer and a student at UNO studying jazz. He



had a band that played at The Funky Butt and my first gig turned into a weekly gig.”

Kelly has had many memorable moments, like the time she performed on the stage at the Apollo Theatre in New York as well as meeting Chaka Khan on a flight. “I had my child with me and was traveling for a performance and I knew I had to sneak into first class to give her my CD and ask for advice. She told me to never give up,” Kelly reflected.

And Kelly has not given up nor does she intend to. She has traveled all over the



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world performing for audiences in the United Kingdom, Spain, Antigua, Barbuda and Peru to name a few. Her musical influence is Sade she says, hands-down. She admires songwriters like Bob Dylan who, she says, expresses stories through song.

As Kelly reflected on the beauty and positive energy that her career continues to bring into her life, she stressed how grateful she is to perform in her hometown among all of the great New Orleans musicians. “There are so many great local artists who have inspired me. Greats like Deacon John and Sharon Martin, who has the greatest stage presence. I look up to my elders and they just inspire me to keep going,” Kelly said.

Kelly reflected on performing at Essence Festival, as well as the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, where she shared the stage with Lenny Kravitz. Another memorable moment was when she performed at a show with Steven Marley, the son of Bob Marley.

“The words of inspiration and encouragement meant the world to me coming from someone of that lineage,” Kelly proudly stated.

Kelly has received many awards and accolades including The Big Easy Award, Best of The Beat Nominee, Creative Loafing Magazine’s Singer/Songwriter of the Year,

and United Nations “Appointed Messenger of Truth”, Louisiana Music Ambassador. “The year I received the Big Easy Award was the same year I was nominated for The Offbeat award and it was all mind blowing to me because as a new artist coming out and being acknowledged by my peers who I watched and learned from on how to perform was amazing. I love being a part of that community it was an honor and just a magical moment.”

Kelly has recorded eight albums and has a catalogue of songs that have yet to be released. She co-produced her latest album, “Surrender,” with producer Darius “Deezle,” Harrison a lifelong friend since middle school. The experience taught Kelly the importance of giving into the moment as Deezle showed up in her living room with a portable recording studio.

“To be present in all the things I’ve asked for are finally catching up with me,” said Kelly.

Some musicians on the album include Yahel Yisrael, who played keys on the entire album and was an integral part of the project, as well as Raion Ramsey, Cassie Watson Francillon, Jamal Batiste and Raja Kassis who all contributed.

On Tuesday nights Kelly can be found at Sweet Lorraine’s where she hosts an open mike night along with the band LoKeyHiLevel who Kelly describes as “a great young band doing great things



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around the city.” She stresses the importance of having a night where people can come and share their creativity. The sign-up opens at 7:00 p.m. and the show starts an hour later at 8:00.

Kelly is living the life she recognized early on that she could pursue and succeed at. She lives intentionally with a child-like wonder. “I live my life for what I feel is best for me, for what feels comfortable and fun. I never want to lose the innocence, pureness and excitement of life,” said Kelly.

Kelly’s music reflects her life philosophy beautifully!

*You can enjoy the music and storytelling of Kelly Love Jones at The Ace Hotel on March 22, as well as at the French Quarter Festival on Saturday, April 12 and Tuesday nights The Sweet Spot at Sweet Lorraine’s.*

*Downloads of Surrender can be purchased at <https://www.kellylovejonesmusic.com> and you can view her social media pages at @kellylovejones instagram and Kelly Love Jones FB*