

THE FANATIC

Tamara Rawlings-Spry is the rock widow of Jeffrey Scott Spry who fronted the 80s band, Felony. Tamara has been on a journey filled with love, loss and hope while keeping Jeffrey's memory alive.

By Helen Marketti

At first glance, many photos of Tamara and Jeffrey support the image of an ideal rock and roll couple. Parties, limos, celebrity friends and all the trappings of Hollywood luster would give anyone a distorted view of what was only surface appeal. Her story is from the heart from someone who truly loved her husband. "Our paths crossed in kind of a strange way," remembers Tamara. "I had a couple of girlfriends who had gone to Palm Springs where they had seen Felony playing. They were enthralled. They were definitely groupies. I took them with me one day to Los Angeles. I was working for Playboy at the time, working on commercials for the Playboy Channel. I took them to an after hour party and they didn't like it. They didn't like the atmosphere or the people. They knew that Felony was playing that same evening and wanted to go see them instead. I had never heard of this band and had no idea who they were. I agreed to drop them off where Felony was playing. I remember on the way there, I was chastising them for being such groupie girls. The band was playing at a club in Long Beach called, The Rumble Seat. As we were walking in, I told them we were staying one hour and that's it."

Tamara continues, "When we walked in the club, I saw this fellow who looked a bit disheveled. I found him attractive though and



we started talking. I asked him his name but as I later learned, he didn't give me his real name. He said he was the band's road manager. Anyway, we hit it off and talked endlessly. We ended up ordering pizza and even walked across the street to shop at a couple of boutiques. There was such an attraction between us, more than I had ever felt toward anyone in my life. Of course, at this point, my girlfriends are ready to leave; only this time I wasn't. (laughs) Felony takes the stage and I see the road manager guy who I was hanging out with

take the microphone. I didn't understand at first what was going on. I thought maybe he was testing the mic for sound check. The next thing he does is get into his costume, flip his hair back and then the show started. I kept watching him, realizing that he had lied to me. I stayed for the show and spoke with him after. I guess he wanted to see if I was just out for someone in the band. This was in 1982 and from then on, I was pretty much with him. We were so much alike. We were married a few years later and had two daughters, Desirae and Natasha."

A wife of a rock star comes with its own challenges and obstacles as in any relationship. "Jeffrey was the most charismatic person ever. He always seemed to command the room as soon as he walked in," recalls Tamara. "There was always a duality with him, always two people in him. What I mean by that is half of the world knew him one way and the other half knew him another. He kept the two worlds separate very well. I don't know how he balanced it but for a long time he did. Every place we went, the sun seemed to shine. People would gravitate toward him. They wanted to wait on him, give him things and be near him. He had a charismatic personality. People were drawn to him. That was the good Jeffrey."

"Then there was the other side of him that was a very dark image. Part of that dark image was because of his upbringing," said Tamara. "Jeffrey had a tough family life. He was the middle child of three boys. He and his brothers, Jack and Joe were in a home environment that was abusive and criminal. They really were the gangsters of rock even at an early age because they actually lived it. Jeffrey always seemed to be the one who lost the approval of his family. He fell short of doing what they wanted. That was part of my battle with him during our time together. Jeffrey's own father committed suicide. Their entire household was dysfunctional. Jeffrey went through a lot of psychological suffering so I feel a lot of anger about that. I always felt they were more about greed and money instead of love and concern."

During the early 80s, Felony had hits with "The Fanatic" which was part of the Valley Girl soundtrack. Their second single was "The Pied Piper" which was produced by Artie Kornfeld. Artie had written the song with Steve Duboff in the 1960s. Another of Felony's singles was also, "Kristine". Their song, "I'm



No Animal" appeared on the soundtrack for Friday, the 13th Part VI. Band members were Jeffrey Spry on lead vocals, brother Joe Spry (guitar), Danny Sands (piano/keyboard), Louis Ruiz (bass) and Arty Blea (drums).

"Music was Jeffrey's entire life. Without music, he had no reason for anything else. It was something he had been doing since he was a little boy," said Tamara. "While Jeffrey didn't play an instrument in the band on a steady basis, he was a song writer and vocalist; a very powerful vocalist. I remember they would have to back him down on the soundboard because his voice was so strong. His wings were so clipped."

Inner turmoil and dissension between Jeffrey and his brother, Joe was beginning to take more attention and energy than creating music. "Jeffrey and Joe did collaborate on material a lot. Scotti Brothers Records wanted only Jeffrey and he wouldn't do that to his brother," said Tamara. "The song, "In the Name of Rock n Roll" was signed by Capitol Records. Joe did the vocals. It seemed he was keeping Jeffrey away from it. Capitol Records wanted Jeffrey on the tracks. There was a meeting at Capitol and Joe was so upset that he caused a scene, which in turn made them lose their record deal. Everything was in turmoil. Those are some of the things I am working on now which is to gain the rights back for what Jeffrey worked on."

"After that, Jeffrey went into such a massive depression. We tried to work on songs together. He no longer had the will to write material so I was working on writing songs," said Tamara. "He kept falling and falling further into depression. I knew it was bad but I didn't know how bad. I kept trying to talk to his brothers and his mother. I didn't want them to turn their back on Jeffrey but it wasn't working. What I did hear back was not much of anything nice. Jeffrey needed to be on stage and sing. He needed to keep the respect as a vocalist and he seemed to have gotten it from everyone except his own family and that's who



he needed it from the most."

On March 9, 1992, Jeffrey Scott Spry committed suicide. "It was a bitch to go through. It was the worst posttraumatic stress disorder you could ever imagine. I had so much to deal with," said Tamara. "Jeffrey was a rock star. He was dramatic. I don't think he really meant to kill himself, I think he wanted to get the attention of his family."

In the years since Jeffrey's death, Tamara has raised her daughters as a single parent and moved along with her life as best she could but Jeffrey is always on her mind. "I had started catching wind that certain publishing rights did not involve Jeffrey. His work belongs to his children. He was my husband and I will not step out of this life without fighting for it. I know I have my work cut out for me."

Tamara has clear thoughts of what she would like fans to know about Jeffrey. "He was a man that shared equally with his band members. He was very giving of his music, lyrics and song writing. He wanted everyone in the band and their families to have a legacy left behind. I would like everyone to know and remember that. There is material that Jeffrey had worked on that I would like to get out there. He would have liked his fans to hear more of his work. One day I will tell even more of the story, sharing the wonderful times as well as the dark side, too. I need to talk about the dark as well as the light. I want to do right by Jeffrey because he deserved it."

Fans may connect with Tamara Rawlings-Spry on Facebook.