

NOW WE'RE TALKIN'

By Helen Marketti

A CONVERSATION WITH MUSICIAN GAIL ANN DORSEY

Bass player, Gail Ann Dorsey has played with many stellar musicians in the industry including David Bowie, Lenny Kravitz, Roland Orzabal (Tears for Fears) and many more. Gail's outstanding talent, commitment and passion for music shows in her performances. She discusses her musical influences, inspirations and thoughts on working with some of the greatest musicians in music history.

"I have always loved all kinds of music," said Gail. "It's hard to categorize all of the music I like. As long as you enjoy the sound and it touches you in some way, it can be from any genre. I enjoy listening to Joni Mitchell, Grand Funk Railroad, The Carpenters and Olivia Newton-John. I love Queen. I think Queen is the best live band I have ever seen. I was always interested in David Bowie's music. I was aware of him while I was growing up. He was on the radar. My favorite album of his is, "Young Americans". He recorded that in Philly which is my home town."



Gail always felt in her heart that a career in music would be her calling. However, she also had a strong interest in cinema. "At first, I thought I would like to be a screenwriter and a director. I spent a lot of time writing scripts. I received a full scholarship to attend California Institute of the Arts as a film major. I was there for a year and a half but ended up returning to music. I do have a love for cinema but do not have the temperament to be a filmmaker. I think music and cinema work together. It was such a male dominated business although I am sure women have made great strides. When I was attending college it was 1980 so I am sure things have changed and progressed," explains Gail. "Music can give you direct gratification. When you are playing in front of an audience, you have instant feedback. Film making on the other hand is a process that takes a very long time. A script you may be working on may not be recognized until three years later. I needed feedback quicker than that to give me the inspiration to continue. When you are playing music, you have direct communication with the audience. They give you feedback all the time with their emotions, their laughter, their tears, whatever it is that moves them is what keeps you going."

Gail played guitar before switching over to bass. "There is something special about the electric guitar that perks up my ears. When I hear Eric Clapton playing a solo or Neil Young, the solos are so powerful it makes me want to cry. You can hear emotion in a guitar. George Harrison's song, "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" is absolutely true," said Gail. "Nancy Wilson of HEART is the first role model I have had. She was such an inspiration. I think she is one of the greatest females in music."

She continues, "I remember telling my mother that I have to learn how to play one of those (guitar). I feel as though it can speak to you as though it is another language. It can communicate so much deeper than words. I have to express myself how I feel through the guitar. Bass guitar is more natural for me to play. It has allowed me to play with some incredible artists."

Gail is working on her fourth solo album. "My albums have all been different from each other. If I had to describe my latest album, it would be similar to the singer/songwriters of the 70s such as Carole King, Carly Simon, The Carpenters, The Fifth Dimension and Helen Reddy. I love playing that style of music and I do not get to do it very often. The material I am writing is in that style. I am more of a Dionne Warwick or Marilyn McCoo singer than I am an Aretha Franklin or Patty LaBelle. I guess you could call the music on my next album easy listening. (*laughs*) But it's good stuff!"

"Right now I am working full time with Lenny Kravitz. While we are not on an official tour we are playing several shows for different events throughout the year," said Gail. "Sometimes I still find it hard to absorb that I have played with these wonderful people. I have had a hard time allowing myself to feel that this is happening."

Gail had played alongside David Bowie for 20 years. "I was working with Roland Orzabal (Tears for Fears) when David called. At first, I wasn't sure it was really him on the phone. When I started working with David, I was terrified that I would not be able to live up to his expectations. He and Roland are both geniuses. They were great mentors. It was as though Roland brought me through the "college years" so to speak and playing with David was how I earned my PhD! (*laughs*) You can't learn without a great teacher. David asked me to sing, "Under Pressure" with him. I remember asking who was going to play bass and he said, "You are!" Then he said, "I'll give you two weeks." He knew I could do it and I did! David Bowie is one of the greatest teachers I ever had. When we came off the road from the Reality Tour in 2004, I finally admitted to myself that I am a good bass player. I will own it. We all play differently and each one of us has a special gift."



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