

# NOW WE'RE TALKIN'



By Helen Marketti

## A chat with Kelle Rhoads about the Musonia School of Music, his own compositions and late brother, Randy Rhoads

Kelle Rhoads has been involved with music since *before* the day he was born. His mother, Delores Rhoads appeared in the Cary Grant movie, *People Will Talk* (1951). Delores is sitting with an orchestra and is playing the French horn. She is pregnant with Kelle during the filming of the movie so he had a very early start in music and entertainment.

Delores Rhoads began the Musonia School of Music in 1948 in the Los Angeles area. It is still a functioning school and has been left as it was over the years so it also serves as a museum. Kelle is the Director of the school and gives music lessons in beginning drum, voice and percussion. He is a very accomplished classical pianist, having three albums released with a fourth one coming later this spring. His brother was the late guitar God, Randy Rhoads.

"I have always loved the Rolling Stones and The Beatles. Widowmaker was another band I enjoyed. Mott the Hoople was another good one with Ian Hunter. I also loved Black Sabbath whereas my brother, Randy didn't like anything about them which is rather ironic," remembers Kelle.

"I graduated from high school in 1974 and then tried junior college for a while but that didn't work out. Having worked as an instructor at my mother's school gave me a chance to work with different students and meet many people. For a short time Randy and I had a band called, Violet Fox, but we really didn't go anywhere. I decided that I didn't want to play in a band any longer. I wanted to pursue other options. Randy continued on with his music endeavors and eventually formed, Quiet Riot."

"One day I was giving drum lessons to one of my students and he asked me what I would really like to do and I casually mentioned that I wanted to work for a record company. He said to me, 'I think I can help you. My dad is the Vice President at Capitol Records.' An interview was set up for me with the VP, which is usually unheard of but, thankfully, he liked my enthusiasm. I ended up in an entry level position in the Mail Room at Capitol Records and I made friends with many people in each department."

Kelle has gone from drummer to lead singer to classical pianist although the route to each

transition was long and scenic.

"I like to work hard but was also a bit lazy," laughs Kelle.

"I remember telling my mom when I was about twelve that I wanted to play a drum

and she told me that I couldn't just play one drum, that I had to learn to play the whole set.

After I saw The Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show and watched Ringo playing the drum set then I knew I could do it, too. I was a drummer for a while then I started thinking I would like to be a singer. This was during the late 70s. I felt I had the personality to be the singer in a band. I was somewhat successful. I was able to release two records and tour all over the world. After awhile, however everything started to become a drag. You want to advance to the next level, keep moving and not be in one spot for too long."

"Once again I left the music business," recalls Kelle. "I worked as a milkman delivery driver. It didn't take long to start getting itchy again about returning to music. I always had classical piano in the back of my mind. I made a decision that I was going to study all the time and work hard until I got to a certain level where I could start composing classical music. Other than my wife, Veronica, it's the most important thing in my life. I have three albums that have been released *Titanic Overture*, *Portraits of Oblivion* and *Pride and Profanity* which is my best seller. I am currently working on my fourth one, which will be called *Magnificent Obsession*. I feel my music reflects what artwork would sound like. What inspires me is another artistic medium. I love going to world class museums such as The Getty that is out here in LA. I also have been to museums in other countries. I will look at a painting for thirty minutes and soak up the inspiration of the artwork. What I do next is then translate what the painting 'sounds' like to me. I love classical piano music but I do not use it as an inspiration for my work. I really love composing. It is my obsession. When I am creating my own work, I will listen to my playbacks. I do not want to be influenced by anyone else's music."

Kelle continues, "On the *Portraits of Oblivion* album is the last recorded track of music that Randy ever did. When Randy was in Quiet Riot, I had my own band, Grand Theft, and we shared a recording studio. One night I went outside with my cassette recorder and I thought I was recording my band. The next day I found out that it wasn't my band. It was Randy jamming with some people. He did a blues song that was amazing. A misconception that many people have is that Randy's talent really took off when he left Quiet Riot and joined Ozzy Osbourne but that wasn't true, he had the gift all along and the blues track proves it. I included Randy's blues track with bits and pieces of music that I had written. The track is showcased like a dial being turned on an old Philco radio. This is the last piece of music that Randy is featured in."

Kelle shares his thoughts on why he feels Randy is still popular after being gone for thirty-two years. "Randy was a guitar player's guitar player. People are still into him. He has very loyal fans. I think there are three key elements that keep Randy's legacy going; first, it was his talent, second, it was his personality. He was a very kind and generous person. Randy was a beautiful human being. I have never heard anyone say anything bad about my brother. Third, I think a lot of it has to do with his premature death. He was the greatest, fastest, rising guitar player in 1982, and then he goes out like a comet. I believe people still have a hard time wrapping their minds around it. He will forever be twenty-five years old and be remembered for the incredible, beautiful music that he wrote."

In addition to working at the school, composing classical music on the piano and thinking ahead to his next project, Kelle also gives tours at Musonia School of Music free of charge. "I think it's a great place to see history and what we are doing currently. For example, someone can take an entire month of guitar lessons, once a week for eighty-four dollars! My mom started the school in 1948 and wanted to keep prices affordable and we still honor her wishes to this day. It is amazing that we are celebrating the 66<sup>th</sup> year of Musonia and it's still a family owned business! We have fans who travel here from all four corners of the earth. They like to see the room that Randy taught in and we have left it as he had it. We still have the amps he used in Quiet Riot. We have ideas of holding special master classes. I compose my music at the school. It's the perfect atmosphere. Classical piano music and the pursuit of original composition is the way the sun sets and the moon rises in my life. It's more than important; it's everything."

Kelle's albums are available for \$10 each. He will take care of the shipping.

He may be reached at: Musonia School of Music, 12111 Tiara Street, Valley Village, CA 91607  
Musonia School of Music is on Facebook.



Kelle Rhoads

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