

HEATHER KROPF *biography*

By Barry Alfonso

A little mystery is a good thing in a song. Line by line, it entices you deeper and leads you towards unknown destinations.

Heather Kropf's songs are miniature mysteries, hidden within vignettes of everyday experience. The contours of her melodies are cleanly wrought; her lyrics are at once plainspoken and elegantly poetic. She delivers them in an evocative voice carried by subtle rhythms and unexpected chords. There's a sense of *possibility* in what she does, of longings to be embraced and risks to be taken.

There's no mystery as to why Heather has attracted a loyal and growing fan base over the years. Her unique strengths as a singer/songwriter have won her a diverse and loyal listenership. Since moving to Pittsburgh in 1995, she's charmed audiences as both a solo performer and with her trio. Regional tours and CD releases have steadily expanded her following.

Heather's music speaks intimately, like a note passed in secret across a crowded room. What she does is at once openhearted and indirect, with plenty of spaces for each listener to slip inside. "I hope that my songs create a sanctuary for people, if only for a little while," she says. "That's how they function for me."

Upbringing, travel and experience have all helped shape her work. Heather spent her early years in Portland, Oregon before moving with her parents to Indiana, where her mother served as a professor at a seminary. Her love for music grew along the way – after singing in choirs as a child, she took up the piano and began composing her own songs. Casual performances while attending college in Virginia gradually led to a more serious pursuit of a music career. After relocating to Pittsburgh, she interned at the alternative music station WYEP 91.3FM and later served as its Sunday afternoon DJ. Meanwhile, she raised her visibility by sharing the stage with such notables as Mason Jennings, Amy Corriea, Peter Himmelman, Eleanor McEvoy, Ben Arnold and Chris Smither.

Her growing self-assurance as an artist can be heard on her two independent releases, *Sky* (2000) and *What Else is Love* (2005). Recorded in collaboration with her longtime comrade Randy Venturini, these albums are built around Heather's understated yet confident vocals and fluent piano playing. Elements of jazz, folk and pop meld together into a genre defying whole. On both albums, there's a sense of personal confession, as well as an underlying resolve and unquenchable curiosity. Their lyric imagery is intensely vivid, offering flashes of clarity amidst brooding landscapes and swirling emotions.

"One thing's certain...I am certain to change," Heather Kropf sings in "Shine." That sense of fluidity and transformation lies at the heart of her work. Heather's songs draw upon a life being lived and dreams still unfolding. Where her music comes from is a mysterious thing. But as her fans can tell you, it's the places her music takes you that really matter in the end.

-- Barry Alfonso