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Home and Never Alone: Coming Up Interview with Guitarist Diana Rein

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It's been a long, hard road home for Blues and Rock Guitarist and Singer Diana Rein, but the journey was well worth it. Recently releasing the long awaited album "Long Road", Diana is as confident as hell and is committed to doing what she set out to do long ago - play the Blues.

"The Six Sting Siren" released her highly-anticipated sophomore album Long Road last week. Written, recorded and produced by Diana, the disc features twelve original tracks on which Rein sings, plays lead, bass, and rhythm guitar. Long Road was mixed and mastered by Peter Duff at Grey Studios in San Diego, CA.

Growing up in Chicago, Diana spent her days singing the music of Bonnie Raitt, Stevie Wonder, Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson and Sheryl Crow. Her Uncle was a drummer at a Chicago blues club which is where Diana had her first Chicago blues stage experience at the age of 8. But it wasn't until 2005, when Diana came across a DVD of Stevie Ray Vaughan that her love of guitar and songwriting came into play. She began teaching herself how to play and wrote songs as if music was a long lost friend. That snowballed into open mics, solo shows, playing with multiple bands and a solo album. In 2013 Diana enlisted the help of her mentor Kelly Richey to take her lead guitar playing to the ultimate level.

Coming Up Magazine had a chance to sit down with Diana recently and talk to her about her life growing up in the entertainment business, the challenges and joys of raising a son, the path back to the blues and her continued plans to come up as a lead guitarist and musician.

First of all, What is Blues to you and how does it differ from other genres of music?

Wow, the blues is a feeling to me, not just music. It just takes over my whole body. I think people use music to work through "life" things. I create and listen to blues based music to get in touch with the emotional/raw part of myself that feels the most vulnerable to reveal and then I use the blues to expose it. It's an outlet for me. It is rare that I will get that vibe from other music. But that's just me. My Blues can be another person's Country, Pop, etc. Music is a beautiful thing as long as it serves a meaningful purpose in your life. As long as it evolves you somehow....

Your latest album, Long Road, is a little edgy with lots of blues, soul, country and Southern rock; how does an L.A. girl find the soul for something with roots so far away?

Well, let's take it further back...I was born in Romania, came to America when I was 3 and lived in Chicago for 20 years collectively and LA/Inland Empire since then. I can't say I found the music within me from a geographical location. It's portable! I credit it to my family roots like my Aunt who was a famous singer in Romania and my Dad who was a Music Professor. I would sleep to the radio as a baby and I remember music being a huge part of my life growing up. I listened to all types of music and I definitely picked up on the fact that some grooves/styles just struck gold with me.

Your opening track and the title of your album is called Long Road. Does this song mean something uniquely special for you?

All of my songs come from a personal place. It talks about what I was going through at that specific time. It was the first song that I wrote after taking a break from music due to a vocal polyp surgery and because I was pissed at myself for not being able to play lead guitar. No disrespect to rhythm playing because I do that too, but my dream as a little girl was to play lead. It just took me a heck of a long time to fulfill that goal because life happens and I suppose my soul's journey had to learn a few lessons before I got to the good stuff. I also had my son Vaughn a year before writing this song and I was ready and full of emotion to put what I was feeling into a song, to start a new chapter.

It's hard to believe that you only learned how to play lead guitar a couple of years ago. What was the learning process like and did you ever feel like quitting and going back to what you were doing?

This time, I made the decision as I did 10 years prior, to learn once and for all. The difference this time was that I applied myself and I wasn't going to let it escape me ever again. I did everything in order to keep me accountable and maximize my learning. I enlisted a teacher by the name of Kelly Richey, who is an amazing Blues Rock artist from Ohio. I begged my parents to watch my son 3 hours a day and my husband would watch him another hour and a half so that I could practice. At night I would watch my influences Stevie Ray Vaughan, Eric Clapton, BB King, Buddy Guy on Youtube. I was constantly asking myself "what am I lacking and what do I need to practice to get there?" I still ask myself these questions because I am still a baby as far as I am concerned with the guitar. What I love about it is that it always keeps me guessing, it keeps me obsessed because there will never be a defining moment where I say "I'm done learning." I am hooked. I was acting previously before making the decision to go 100% music and I am happier than I have ever been right now. Creating the music I want to hear. No doubts, no regrets.

What were you doing 5 years ago and how did that help you start on your current path? Five years ago I was writing a short script for a film called Gypsy Gift and I was raising money to get that produced. I acted in that and it was a 20 minute short film that was loosely based on some personal experiences. I had my vocal surgery two months before shooting the film. It was the first time I played the guitar and sang in the film since having the surgery which was special. I learned how to edit the film on my own and how to take the lead on a project. Because of this I am now able to shoot and edit my music videos that I post to youtube. I don't have to outsource for much unless the concept of a video is too much for me to handle. I like having that creative control or at least the knowledge of how to do it so I can talk shop with collaborators.

Let's be honest, you are smokin' hot and they say first impressions are the strongest. Is it hard for people to see beyond that and to appreciate you for the true artist and musician that you are?

Come on now! Ha ha People can see through that stuff a mile away. If I wasn't authentic in any way, people would just write me off as a laughing stock. I focus on the music because that means the most to me. I still see myself as a bucktoothed 11 year old girl, or a really awkward 15 year old girl just wanting to fit in. If I wanted to focus on the appearances part I would accentuate that as others have done, but I feel it really distracts people. I want to be a vehicle of change and to transform someone's life experience while they are seeing me play. I want to send the message that any goal is achievable if you put your mind to it. I really hope I can inspire people. I don't know how I could effectively do that if they just keep staring at my legs in a miniskirt. I like some flash for the stage but more in the line of sequins, not body parts!!! I'll just blind you with sequins and then you can really just use your ears to hear the music!! hahaha

What has been the hardest obstacle for you to overcome as a person and as artist and has this helped you become a better blues musician?

The hardest obstacle has to be being a parent. There's nothing that I can think of that is so rewarding yet so frustrating at the same time. Especially when you are the type of parent that I am. I love being with my son nonstop, not missing a beat with his growth but at the same time I want a career and there is so much music and playing in me that I need to get out. So it's a constant balancing act BUT if I didn't have my son I would probably squander more of my time. So having him keeps me focused, on point and it makes me value the time that I have and make the most of it. I can't thank my little guy more for that. He's the reason why I finally reached my guitar playing goal and why I have an album out now. That's a real gift he has given me.

Is it true you got your start in the limelight as a child actor?

It is very true. I was 11 years old when I booked the gig to be one of the children in Home Alone and then later in Home Alone II. I went to a performing arts elementary school and they hooked me up with an agent who got me the audition. That turned into 4 callbacks and then one day I heard the announcement on the intercom in the school that I booked the part. I had no clue what I was in for. We filmed for around 5 weeks for the first film and it was such a surreal fun world. It really made me feel that acting was my destiny even though it felt like pulling teeth after that first initial success in booking those films. But I kept on that path for many years because I thought it was right. I should have listened to what the Universe was trying to tell me because music popped up constantly for me, yet I kept pushing it down.

Was acting something you wanted to pursue as you got older or did you see/do you see yourself as something more than that?

I had my heart set on acting, I kept thinking I would be the next Meryl Streep. I had blinders on, so focused. But the one problem I always had with acting is that being nude came up so much and that just isn't me. And it's hard when you haven't had an opportunity in so long and then they dangle the carrot: you can book this job if you will go for the nudity. What a let down. I did see myself as more than that. I saw myself as an artist that needed to create and be the master of my own ship instead of being at the beck and call of some Director or Casting Director. When you are doing something that feels like you are being drained of energy or it's just plain exhausting and it doesn't add any value to your life then do it sooner than I did and change course. When you are fully on the right path it will feel like you are climbing higher and higher and there is a purpose and you are just unstoppable. Then you know it's the right path that you are taking.

Track 8 on Long Road is called Don't Walk Away. Was this written about or for somebody?

Well all of my songs are personal or deal with feelings that are living inside of me that just can't be spoken, it's too hard. Singing them takes the edge off because they are being housed in a beautiful arrangement of tones. It's one of my favorite songs.

Something that really stands on in your music besides the awesome guitar playing is your vocals. You have such a beautiful voice and can be singing numerous styles of music. Is Blues your way of expressing the real you?

Thank you! When I was younger people used to say that my voice sounds very Country. I would sing Bonnie Raitt a lot and her music had that mix of blues and country and even some reggae thrown in there. I definitely feel most at home with Blues and like with the guitar, I am a constant work in progress. But when I sing, I want the emotion to be felt and I feel like the Blues is the best gateway for me to get that done.

Do you see yourself switching gears and maybe playing other styles of music?

When I made my first album Back Room, I really wanted to play some more blues but my limitations on guitar didn't help me out when it came to composing. So I did what I could and I had more of a range of music I feel. With this album Long Road I finally have my riff based Blues Rock songs that I wanted to do 10 years ago. So I see myself hanging out in this arena for a long time as well as writing some more traditional blues as well.

What do the next several months look like for you - will you start touring doing more local shows?

I will be practicing like a mad woman!! Haha And when not practicing I will be lining up some local shows/festivals.

And finally, you know our Coming Up music magazine is actually inspired by the paths we take and the obstacles we overcome to find greatness and to realize our dreams. Can you share with us and our readers a key life lesson you have learned to realize your goals and become a better person?

I am a guitar player here and now, with my second album because I put in the time and dedication and I chipped away at it....little baby steps everyday. But man, the things you can accomplish when you do something everyday. It adds up and quickly. Even when there were days that I couldn't be playing, I was thinking about it or watching one of my favorite artists playing. You create your life as much or more with your mind than just the physical acts of doing things. Stay positive and goal oriented in your mind and what you think about you will bring about.



Purchase Autographed copy of Long Road album here at: <http://www.dianarein.com>

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