

## KEITH LANDRY INTERVIEW

DECEMBER 2005

Will: Hey Keith, thanks for getting in touch. For the uninitiated, you toured with Toto as as a backing vocalist on the Hydra tour in 1980. What are your memories of that tour?

Keith: Yes, it was the "In Search Of The Hydra" tour in 1980 & the memories are still wonderful. All of the guys in the band are 1st class musicians, (as everyone knows), & a treat to have worked with. They're also some of the funniest people I have ever met and worked with; (Bobby, Luke, Jeff, & Hungate). Getting to know the late/great Jeff Porcaro was a treat in itself. Jeff use to play what I would call those "Grand Canyon" grooves, because once you fell into that "groove", there was no climbing out. I've played with many great drummers since then, and no one could ever match Jeff's amazing feels.

Will: Absolutely, everyone misses Jeff. As well as singing back-up vocals, I gather that you also played guitar? Not too many people can claim they've played guitar onstage alongside Luke!

Keith: That's true, but then again, I don't necessarily claim that I played guitar around Luke. I couldn't even tune his guitar, (his tech did that for him. Get it? hahaha.

Will: What's your favourite recollection of the time you've spent on the road with Toto?

Keith: Okay.... you asked for it! There are so many stories, and I'll try to keep it relatively clean. I can remember times when I'd be talking to a girl & Luke would come up & say "Keith, don't forget to take your penicillin" and just walk away leaving me to convince the chick that he was just kidding. Needless to say, by that time, she would have a pretty scared look on her face. Another time we were driving through a small town & Hungate was sitting there quietly reading a book in the tour bus, and out of nowhere he jumped up and opened the window and hollered "Immense penises. Get your immense penises here" and then just closed the window, sat down

and got back to his reading.

Will: Hahaha! Dare I ask...you said there are many stories? hahaha

Keith: Well then, so much for keeping it clean! This includes Luke, Jeff & Hungate. These guys love practical jokes. One late night after a gig at one of our many hotels, Jeff's room was located directly across the hall from mine. He knocked on my door & wanted to know who crapped in front of his door. I told him that I didn't know, so, of course, he asked me which room Luke was in. After I told him, he went to knock on Luke's door (who was already sound asleep). While Luke was stumbling to the door, Jeff started peeing on the door and when Luke opened the door, Jeff just continued peeing on Luke's leg. Immediately, Luke yelled "I didn't do it, it wasn't me!". The next morning on the bus, Jeff said "I don't know who did it, but whoever it was needs to be checked out because that was the worst looking stool I've ever seen! Also, whoever did it didn't do it right because you should have squatted in front of the door so that it sticks to the carpet. You must have done it in your room and then brought it to my door on a fork". Finally, Luke confessed that it wasn't him, but he & Hungate had bet the bus driver each \$50.00 that the bus driver wouldn't do it. Luke's final comment was "Not only did I lose 50.00 bucks, but I got my leg pissed on."

Will: Hahahahahaha! That's great! Moving swiftly on, how did you come into contact with Toto originally?

Keith: Bobby Kimball & I were friends in Louisiana & he was responsible for getting me to move to Los Angeles. He picked me up at the airport just after midnight in August of '79 and brought me to a studio where Toto was recording "All Us Boys". The very next day, my first full day in L.A., he brought me with him to a session that he was on, and he was singing with Bill Champlin, (who's now with CHICAGO) & Tom Kelly. It was "Marie & Cherie Currie's" album and Jai Winding, the producer of the album, said that he could hear a fourth harmony part in the song that they were singing and right then Bobby recommended me. When I went into the room they were recording in, Champlin gave me the top part to sing & we all nailed it. At that time, David Paich dropped by & happened to hear me singing with them & that planted the seed. David talked to Bobby, Bobby talked to me, and that was the start of it.

Will: Apparently, Bobby still jokingly refers to you as "Kees Ranry"! How did that nickname originally come about? It sounds a bit like a drunk pronunciation of your name!

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Keith: Actually, when we went to Japan, the Japanese couldn't pronounce "Keith Landry", so they would call me "Kees Ranry". Everyone in the band thought it was so funny that Bobby still calls me "Kees" to this day. You want to hear an even funnier story? Ask Bobby what "Skimballs" means in Japanese? hahaha

Will: I shall! What's your favourite Toto album? Have you kept in touch with Toto's albums since Hydra?

Keith: That's a hard one, because each album has it's own personality and character. But I have to lean towards TOTO IV because of the groove rock tunes like "Rosanna" & "Africa". The "Hydra" album still holds a special place in my heart, though, because Bobby use to play me his version of "Mama" that he wrote and it had such a strong R&B flavor that it used to knock my socks off. Then Toto recorded it & Jeff added his magic to it, and the rest is history.

Will: Other than the time you've spent with Toto, what would you consider to be the high points of your career as a vocalist/musician?

Keith: Since Toto, I have sung in many movie & television sound tracks, like "Rocky IV", "Staying Alive", "Summer Rental" and other movies. This all was going on while working on a great band project with drummer, Aynsley Dunbar, who has played with David Bowie, Frank Zappa, Journey, Starship, White Snake & others, guitarist Frank Marino with Mahogany Rush., and Scott Shelly who was with Boz Scaggs and Dan Fogelberg. The project came so close to getting signed, but didn't quite get there because of the typical record label politics and this was such a shame because it was a stellar band.

Will: Cool, that sounds like a great line-up! I'm sure you've got some great tales of your studio sessions too!

Keith: Yeah, but nothing worth putting in print. We mostly were in the studio to get the job done. That's an expensive playground and a much more serious "hang" than the road.

Will: Who are you currently working with?

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Keith: I'm singing & playing mandolin with the well known country/pop star Lee Greenwood ("God Bless the USA" a.k.a. "Proud To Be An American"). He also was the first one to record "Wind Beneath My Wings" which he had a big hit with in Europe. I'm also currently working on my own band project right now in Nashville with other L.A. musicians who have transplanted here. I don't want to talk about it right now until things are a little further along with it. It's also got some great musicians involved.

Will: Which guitars, amps and EFX do you play/use?

Keith: I have a 1970 Custom Gibson Les Paul, a couple of Takamine acoustics, a Godin acoustic & an Ovation style mandolin. I'm not playing much guitar right now because I've been playing mando with Greenwood for awhile now. To be honest, my main instrument has always been my voice. I just happen to play guitar, mandolin, piano, and percussion.

Will: Right. Having moved in 1979 from Louisiana to California, what brought about your move from Los Angeles to Nashville? A change in the session scene, a career move towards country music, or being geographically closer to your roots?

Keith: I had a country/rock band called "Jagged Moon" that was a high energy, powerful 6 piece band with 5 singers. It was based out of L.A. We were a mixture of the Eagles & Restless Heart, with huge vocals and very talented instrumentalists. We moved to Nashville to promote the band, but the sound wasn't quite country enough for Nashville and the power of the vocals and bigger "pop influenced" sound intimidated Nashville record execs. The labels loved it, but didn't know how to promote it. It was a very different sound for country at that time. When that band fell apart, I was asked to replace the girl singer who was singing with Lee Greenwood at the time. He wanted an all male band for the road, and I've been with him for 6 years now.

Will: What advice would you give an aspiring young musician, trying to break into the world of session vocals?

Keith: Other than keeping your voice in great shape, hone in on your vocal harmonizing skills and reading music is always a plus in the studio. Also, work on your blend with all kinds of singers. Finally, learn to "sell" your vocals so that you come across on tape as very believable and "real". It's a different skill than "live" singing. You have to get all that big, live emotion on

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tape.

Will: What do you like doing when you're not singing or playing?

Keith: Hanging out with my wife Janna & my 4 year old son Weston, and doing family stuff, and traveling.

Will: Do you keep in touch with any of the guys apart from Bobby or do you have a message you'd like me to pass onto them?

Keith: I haven't seen Bobby for a couple of years now & I wish we were in touch more often, but I do run into David Hungate once in awhile here in Nashville. Tell all the guys that I said "Hi" and that I miss them. Also tell them that I still have every bit of my high end so if they decide they want that "Kimball/Landry" blend again, they just have to call me. haha.

Will: Anything else you'd like to add?

Keith: Happy Holidays to you, Will and all of you out there & keep it real.

Will: Thanks for your time Keith, and to Benno Schraa for introducing us! This is a great addition to the collection of interviews with the illustrious musicians who have performed with Toto over the years! All the best for your band project in Nashville.

Keith: Thank you Will, it's been my pleasure.

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