

Kate Gaffney Biography

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Singer -songwriter Kate Gaffney honed her skills in her native Philadelphia, jumped from coast to coast, and laid musical roots in Northern California. Gaffney has found her comfortable place within the fertile Bay Area music community, playing with the likes of Dave Brogan (ALO), Chris Haugen (JamBay, Newfangled Wasteland), James Nash and Joe Kyle Jr. (both of the Waybacks) and more bolstered by "the Kitchen Sink Sessions" - an ongoing series of Thursday night gigs at S.F.'s Connecticut Yankee. Her latest album "The Coachman" features contributions from guitarist Steve Kimock, pedal steel ace Greg Leisz and multi-instrumentalist Jackie Greene, whom she met during her days in Sacramento. With her first High Sierra Music Festival nod this year, good things continue to develop for this rising talent.

Like many of the influences who helped forge her career, singer/songwriter Kate Gaffney finds her roots in music that was made years before she was born.

For Kate, music "is all about the songs and the players," and her second full-length album, *The Coachman* (DIG Music), finds her blending soulful songwriting and resonant baritone with players she admires from both the Americana and jam-band scenes. Kate admires those genres, she says, because it appeals to "the people who want something new, but who are steeped in the old ways." These are the song-focused acts she discovered in high school like The Beatles, Crosby Stills Nash and Young and the not-very-sensitive-singer-songwriter riffage of Led Zeppelin.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Gaffney discovered her own muse early in the new millennium in Sacramento, where a long-established music scene was getting a reboot thanks to national attention focused on local prodigy, Jackie Greene. At the time Gaffney was using her degree in social work from Penn State at Child Protective Services. It was a job that made her, in a word, "miserable" and music became her "outlet for all the sadness she witnessed."

Though she'd dabbled with writing and started playing guitar as a hobby, it wasn't until 2002 when Gaffney's discontent at work ran straight up against Greene's optimism and ambition, that she got what she needed: inspiration. "Here was someone my age playing music that was evocative of the music I loved," she says. "After I left my job and was on unemployment and wondering what I was going to do when the unemployment ran out, Greene mused, 'start getting gigs, you can make money at that.'"

Seeking more experience, and perhaps a bit homesick, Kate left Sacramento in late 2003 and traveled back across country towards Pennsylvania. During a brief stop in Austin, Texas she chanced to meet the late, great Clifford Antone, musical entrepreneur and talent-spotter, who told her she was good enough to make a living with music. She didn't stick around Austin, but continued home and landed herself back in Philadelphia, playing clubs and doing a "brutal" internship playing four-hour shows on the Jersey Shore. It toughened her as a performer and inspired another spurt of songwriting which resulted in her first EP, *Highways* and her first full length album, *The New Then* in

2005. She also gained more gigging experience with a residency at the World Café Live in Philly and was invited by Americana guru Gene Shay to play on his show on the influential AAA station WXPB.

In 2007, once again armed with inspiration and a batch of new songs, Gaffney went into the studio in Philadelphia, then on to LA to finish recording the tracks that would become her soon-to-be-released, *The Coachman*. Making the album, produced by Barrie Maguire (Amos Lee, Natalie Merchant), surrounded Kate with a producer and musicians that would help bring Kate's vision to fruition. She had a lot of help, with a cast of amazing musicians including jamb and stalwart Steve Kimock on guitar, pedal steel ace Greg Leisz, The Innocent Criminals (Ben Harpers's band mates) and multi-instrumentalists Jackie Greene, Andrew Lipke and Nate LaPointe.

The new album starts with the brief solo acoustic confession, *My Word*, Gaffney soon roars into action with the furious, Susan Tedeschi/Bonnie Raitt inspired *What Kind of Man* (co-written with David Kalish and Maguire), a witty complaint about a man who has treated her wrong. Gaffney's honesty, sugared by wit and her ability to throw a surprising twist into a song is most evident in *Give It A Whirl*.

"He ran out in front of my car/I almost hit him and then he started/Kissing me, begging me/Be my girl/And I said, 'Let's give it a whirl.'"

The Coachman is full of great songs, but two more deserve special mention. *The Ballad Of Sleepy John* is a Jackie Greene song he wrote about their days at a former strip club where both cut their teeth as performers. On the title track, *The Coachman*, staying true to her jam-band influences, Kate encourages the band to let it all out – for what ended up being 18 minutes, to close the album.

Kate's has also assembled a top notch supporting cast, *The One Night Band*, featuring some of the valleys finest players including Mikey Palmer on bass and Jon Wood on guitar (both of Mumbo Gumbo) and Tom Monson on drums. Gaffney also performs as a duo featuring 2007 (Sacramento Music Awards) Guitar Player of The Year, Steve Randall on guitar and lap steel. Hitting the road with this stellar band will surely build upon Kate's growing resume and add to her laundry list of experiences which include supporting Richie Havens, Loudon Wainwright, Jo Dee Messina and Sophie B. Hawkins. Her past travels across the country have also provided Kate with some career shaping opportunities such as singing the National Anthem for the Philadelphia Phillies, performances at Club Passim, The Tin Angel, The Fillmore San Francisco and World Café Live.

Smitten by the music, enamored of the players, Kate Gaffney is poised to hit the road ready to support her soon-to-be-released *The Coachman* with heavy regional and national touring. If all of this isn't enough from Kate's relatively young career, she has recently signed with DIG Music (who helped launch the careers of Jackie Greene, Chris Webster and Sal Valentino). Add to this a world-class marketing team from across the country and you have the makings of one hard-to-beat-high-flying-Americana songstress.