

## KERI NOBLE Biography

Given her roots in Detroit, it would be easy to assume that Keri Noble grew up in the '80s surrounded by the rich musical history and culture of the Motor City. But things were not quite that way.

The daughter of a Christian pastor in a small, Spanish-speaking church on Detroit's southwest side, Noble was raised in a strict household where secular music was generally frowned upon. "I was home-schooled from first through third grade," she explains. "And then I was put in a Christian school. My high school was predominantly black, and the church that I went to was all Hispanic. The environment I grew up in was definitely multicultural, but the music I listened to was not. It was primarily church music. There was no R&B or soul or Motown. I missed all that."

By her late teens, though, she'd heard enough bits and pieces of R&B, hip-hop and other urban sounds – on car radios or MTV videos playing at friends' houses – to realize that there was an entire world waiting outside the walls of the church.

But it was the voice of Joni Mitchell, more than anything else, that steered Noble toward songwriting. One listen to Mitchell's 1971 album, *Blue*, and she suddenly had a sense of direction.

"I love the idea of one artist and their instrument," she says. "That album is pretty stripped down. It's pretty basic. There's not a lot of production there to date it. That record just felt so pure to me, and those songs are so powerful and expressive. I don't know why I was so open to it at that moment in my life, but I played that CD so much I wore it out."

And so began the songwriting, more as a means of personal expression than as an attempt to launch a career as a professional musician. "I had already been journaling a lot, and I had taken eight years of piano lessons," says Noble. "At that point, I thought maybe I could try to put my words to music and see what would happen. I didn't start out by saying, 'I want to be a musician.' It just sort of evolved. I had felt pretty lost up to that point, and I had a lot to say."

After a few years of writing and polishing, Noble put together a demo and gave it to guitarist Billy McLaughlin on one of his tour stops in Detroit. The two musicians became friends, and McLaughlin eventually invited Noble to open for him at a show at the Fine Line in Minneapolis. While there, he introduced her to some members of the local music scene. At 24, Noble left Detroit and made the permanent move to Minneapolis.

In 2003, she signed with EMI/Manhattan. Her debut album, *Fearless*, was released the following year and met with high praise from the press. "The CD got picked up in so many worldwide markets that I got to do a lot of touring in Europe and Asia, which was great, because I had never traveled before in my life," says Noble. "I got to open for some great people, like Cyndi Lauper and B.B. King. I got some exposure that I wouldn't have had otherwise."

The downside was that *Fearless* enjoyed far less exposure in the States than it did elsewhere. “The guys who signed me had also signed Norah Jones,” Noble says. “So they had a girl who played the piano who was a raging success, and they wanted to get another girl who played the piano in hopes of having another raging success. But there’s really nothing I do that’s the same as what she does, other than the fact that I’m a female and I play the piano. *Fearless* was very ballad-heavy, but I tend to not be that ballad-heavy. But that’s what they wanted.”

The whole experience prompted Noble to ask herself some very basic questions about whether she wanted to continue to pursue music professionally. “Did I really want to be a part of this machine?” she says. “And if I did, why? It’s not like someone can take the artistry away from you. I could go play in coffee houses and bars if I wanted to and still be happy doing it.”

In the end, she decided that “there was still more to be done, on a scale whereby I could actually make a living.” She signed with JVC and released *Let Go* in Japan in November 2007.

In addition to the success of *Let Go*, she has also branched out into other media. Her music has been used in popular TV series on either side of the world, *So You Think You Can Dance* in the U.S. and *Handsome Woman* in Japan. Her song “Look At Me,” was featured in the Japanese film, *Tokyo Tower*. In addition, her music is currently part of an 18-month TV commercial campaign in Japan for Shiseido cosmetics.

In the U.S., she signed with Telarc in the spring of 2008, and has recorded an EP to be released in conjunction with U.S. tour dates scheduled for the summer. A full length Telarc release is scheduled for February 2009.

Eight years after leaving her comfortable – if somewhat limited – surroundings in her native Detroit, Noble has come full circle in many respects. “In some ways, I’ve come this far to get to a place that feels like a beginning,” she says. “That’s what makes for great art – the idea of reinventing yourself and being in a place that’s new again. But you do it because you can’t not do it. if you could do something else, then you probably wouldn’t last in this business.”

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