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QUEEN OF COLLABORATION

CHANTAL KREVIAZUK

Avril Lavigne. Kelly Clarkson. Gwen Stefani. These are just a few of the major-league artists that Canadian songwriter Chantal Kreviazuk has worked with over the past few years.

“I just did a songwriting session that went exceedingly well,” Chantal confides. “I’m working on a project I can’t really talk about yet, with a very high-profile person. Collaborating makes me feel more whole as a writer, because I can do all these different things. Sometimes you can say things through other people’s music that you wouldn’t be able to say yourself.”

But Kreviazuk is also an acclaimed singer-songwriter in her own right. With her latest record, *Ghost Stories*, written and produced with husband Raine Maida of the band Our Lady Peace, Chantal returns to her piano-based solo roots. “It’s been the greatest response to anything I’ve done,” she says. “This album really is very much me. Raine had this vision of not putting guitars on the album, so it’s more piano-oriented than ever before. But it’s also much more rhythmic and driving.”

Kreviazuk says that working with other artists has helped shape her own music: “Experimenting with others has allowed me to explore what I can do. It’s made me less frightened of moving away from my own ‘genre.’ Now I don’t feel that I need to be Tori or Sarah or whatever. Returning to my own music after writing with everybody else, for the first time I truly feel I’m me.”

Chantal didn’t set out to become a collaborative songwriter. “I always thought that writing a great song by yourself was the ultimate musical accomplishment,” she says. “Now my attitude has changed. If you write an amazing song alone, that’s wonderful. But I also see the power of collaboration. Because honestly, you’re not that prolific every single day. You’re not that much of a genius all the time. Working with other people, they can carry you sometimes. They can guide you or push you.

They can inspire you. They can take you places you never would have gone alone.”

“Preparing to work with another writer is very much an energy thing,” Kreviazuk continues. “You start with your impressions of that artist and their image, then try to tap into what’s going on in their life, and their mood that day. For the session I just did, I brought in a song fragment from literally 13 years ago. I’d forgotten about it for the longest time, but it seemed right for this project, so out it popped. And now the song is done! The chorus, the sentiment, the hook, and the title all completely match this verse part I’ve had forever.”

Sometimes working with her husband brings another twist to the art of collaboration. “The longer I’ve been with Raine,” says Chantal, “the more I see how rare these husband-and-wife teams are, and the more I appreciate it. You learn to be respectful, and let the other person spread their wings a little. Right now he’s working on his own thing, and I have this separate project. But when we come back together, we’ll have learned new things. We’ll have changed and grown, so we can bring more to each other than ever.”

In fact, observes Kreviazuk, individual time can be as important to a close collaboration as time spent working together: “If you spend time away, it’s like you’re refueling your patience. You can come back and appreciate your partner’s differences and strengths again. But you know, sometimes you go away and work with someone else, then come home and say, ‘Oh my God, I can’t wait to work with you again, because this thing is hell!’”

Chantal plays a 7’6” Yamaha C7. “I’m in love with this piano!” she enthuses. “I sit down, and it just screams. I think that deep down, I’ve always craved this bold, brilliant, big tone. It’s like a full-bodied wine for me. Even the dark, sad notes are pro-