

BETH HART: RAW TALENT

SOME MUSICIANS POUR THEIR HEARTS OUT ON STAGE. But when singer-songwriter Beth Hart opens her mouth, she pours out her guts and her soul, too. With a huge rock voice that's simultaneously ragged and intimate, Hart has won fans around the world through her powerful live shows and studio albums—including her most recent European release, 2007's *37 Days*, which captures the excitement and spontaneity of her live performances.

"Sometimes when we rehearse or play live, it's so fresh and intense," Beth explains. "We wanted to capture that feeling, so we recorded at Center Staging, which is an amazing artist rehearsal place in LA. They filmed everything, as well. It was this incredible experience, playing live to tape, but in a facility where you could master it and make it sound as beautiful as a normal record."



Since her first forays into the Los Angeles club scene in the early 1990s, Hart's career has been filled with dramatic ups and downs. Her 1996 major-label debut, *Immortal*, featured not one but three legendary producers: David Foster, the force behind Josh Groban and Michael Bublé; Mike Clink, best known for producing Guns N' Roses's *Appetite for Destruction*; and Hugh Padgham, who's worked with everyone from Paul McCartney and David Bowie to Vanessa Carlton.

Hart scored her biggest hit with 1999's "LA Song," from her second album, *Screamin' for My Supper*. During the same period, she starred in the off-Broadway musical *Love, Janis*, based on Janis Joplin's letters. But her musical career was temporarily derailed by substance abuse problems.

"One of my last turning points as an artist was when I went through major, major drug addiction," Hart confides. "It was just before my third album, *Leave the Light On*. But now I'm over five years clean and sober. And I think the reason I'm still alive is because I'm still making music."

Beth's love affair with sound began early. "I was four when I started taking piano lessons," she says. "I woke up my parents in the middle of the night, playing some song that my older sister had been practicing!"

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She also played cello and studied classical singing. "It's still my favorite music to this day," she notes. "Anything Chopin, I love it. Beethoven, I love it. The darker the better. Not so much the Mozart—too light and happy. I just love those guys who sound like they're dying."

Hart currently spends much of her time touring in Scandinavia and the Netherlands. Onstage, she plays a Yamaha CP33 stage piano. "I normally don't like any of those keyboards, but when I first saw this one, I said, 'What is that keyboard, and why does it sound so good?' So I got one, and used it for years until I beat it to death." She laughs. "I have two of them right now, one in Europe and one here in the US for rehearsals. I just love it!"

Beth appreciates the CP33's roadworthiness—but that's far from her favorite feature. "I don't have to worry about it breaking down or going out on me," she says. "But the thing I like most is that it's really sensitive to touch. If I play hard, I hear the tone change. And if I play soft, it's really soft, like it would be on a real piano."

Hart's keyboard is scheduled for a workout this year, with more European dates booked through the fall. She's also thinking about writing new material. "I'm going through a shift," she says. "Especially with lyrics. I feel like I've painted the same painting with the same colors for the past five years, and it's going to take some courage to find a new way to express myself. I just need to be able to tell my truth, whatever that is!"

As Beth's star rises again, two things remain constant: her sheer talent, and her passion for music. "Someone once told me something really special," she reflects. "He said, 'No matter what you do, Beth, nothing will take away your gift of music.' No matter what—if I ruin my life, if I say I hate myself, if I go to prison for 50 years—I will always love music. That's something not even I can take away from myself. I think surviving means never giving up. Success has nothing to do with other people approving of what you do. But it does have to do with you approving. And if you're not happy with what you're doing, then maybe you shouldn't do it!"

