REAL AND ON THE ROAD

When singer/songwriter Aslyn was recording her debut album, *Lemon Love*, her producers surprised her with a special treat: a string scoring session at London's famed Abbey Road Studios.

For Aslyn, whose piano-based songs feature chord progressions inspired by such artists as the Beatles and Elton John, it was a memorable experience. "I recorded eight of the twelve tracks in England, at Real World Studios in Bath," she recalls. "When they said we were going to England, I said, 'Yeah, I want to go to Abbey Road,' but, I didn't think anyone would buy it, since it was my first record. And as a surprise, they said, 'We're going there to record the strings!"

Lemon Love's Peter Max-inspired artwork echoes Aslyn's classic songwriting influences. Since its release in March 2005, Aslyn has toured almost nonstop, bringing her personal, idiosyncratic songs to audiences across the country.

Aslyn grew up playing piano and wrote her first song at 14. "It's really bad," she laughs. "It's called 'I Want to Hold Your Hand.' It's funny—there's such an amazing song with that name, and mine is so bad! I came home from summer camp with a crush on a guy, and I just sat down at the piano in a different way."

So began a deeper, more personal relationship with music. "Writing songs became an expression, a way for me to work through things in my head and in my heart," says Aslyn. "It became such a liberating thing for me. The more I let myself be vulnerable and write about personal things, the more I craved that feeling of letting go. Sometimes I end up with a song that no one will ever hear—it's just for me, just to work through something. And then sometimes I end up with an offering for other people."

As a classically trained pianist, Aslyn relies on her instrument as much as her voice to tell her stories, especially in live performance. "There's a lot more piano live than on the record," she notes. "Right now I'm on tour with a trio—just me, a bass player, and a drummer. So it's a little more raw and immediate than the record."

In performance, Aslyn plays a Yamaha P250 digital piano. "I use it every single night," she says. "I love the touch of the P250, and the piano sound is so amazing."

Aslyn says the instrument also helps her feel more comfortable onstage. "The action is so similar to a real piano. When I was searching for the right keyboard, I looked for a piano sound that gave me the same feeling as sitting at a piano. I actually have the P250 inside a spinet frame—I want to feel as at home as I can. So when I'm playing, I can lose myself in that feeling, just as if I'm sitting at a piano. It's exactly what I wanted."

This summer Aslyn is opening several shows for Gavin DeGraw, then touring in support of the Chris Isaak Band. "I toured with Chris Isaak last August," she says. "It was one of my first national tours, and it was really amazing. He and his band are so consistent, and he was so open and friendly to my band and me. So I'm really looking forward to this tour. He's someone that you can learn from."

For a relatively new artist, Aslyn has already become a road-savvy professional. But that's not to say that she's jaded. Far from it, she says: "The more real I can be in front of people, and the more vulnerable I can be onstage, the easier it is for people to see who I really am, and realize that these songs are real stories, about real life, that they can grasp onto in some way for their own lives."

And "being real" takes dedication and focus, as well as talent and the perfect keyboard. "Every night before I walk out onstage," Aslyn says, "I tell myself, okay, you're going back to those original places where you were in your head and heart when you wrote these songs'. Every night I wear my heart on my sleeve. I refuse to go out there and be stale, to not connect with some of the songs just because they're uncomfortable, or because I don't want to go back to that place and remember those things. But that's the most beautiful part about music, too—it can move you over and over and over again."

"I love the touch of the P250, and the piano sound is so amazing."