

KRISTIN HERSH BIO

Kristin Hersh's solo life -- her "day job" she calls it -- is ongoing. She's recorded five solo albums -- one prior to, and four since Throwing Muses split: *Hips and Makers*, 1994 -- *Sky Motel*, 1997 -- the internet-only-sold Appalachian covers collection *Murder, Misery and Then Goodnight*, 1998 -- *Strange Angels*, 1999 -- *Sunny Border Blue*, 2001, and now a new solo album, *The Grotto*. Perhaps the most nakedly acoustic album she's ever made, it was recorded quick on the heels of the rampantly electric Throwing Muses album.

Both *The Grotto* and the new eponymous Throwing Muses albums are being released on the same day. "I didn't want either record to suffer delays because of the other one," Kristin reasons. "They're related. They were recorded during the same year, and they came from the same time and place."

During six months back in Rhode Island immediately following the death of a close family member, Kristin wrote the songs that became *The Grotto*. (The title refers to the Providence, RI neighborhood where she lived at the time.) Was its acousticity in direct response to Throwing Muses' electricity? "Well, yeah, I chose the songs in light of that fact. They could take that airiness. But I don't write with intention, I'm not that smart. These songs appeared to be a different side of the same coin, so I decided to let this record be as extreme as it needed to be. The contrast of the hard, fast, raw Muses record and an acoustic, bare, ambient solo record seemed complimentary."

Kristin was pregnant while recording *The Grotto*, and gave birth in mid-November to Bodhi, her fourth son.

Kristin's accomplices on *The Grotto* were Howe Gelb (Giant Sand) on piano and violinist Andrew Bird (Bowl of Fire, and ex-Squirrel Nut Zippers). Kristin plays all guitars. "Andrew, Howe and I have toured together in the past and they always seemed like a great couple of people to have contribute to the right record. *The Grotto* seemed like a perfect opportunity. "Our approach to music is similar, but their perspectives are truly their own and that was valuable to me. They're incredible musicians. I'm not painting when I'm playing the piano, Howe is."

"I think it's a very sweet record. Spooky, but sweet. I said to Billy, 'these songs seem to be about how I can't leave you'. He thought for a second and said, 'That's nice!' And it is."

Kristin comments on the album's opening, 'Sno Cat': "Billy and I had a fight, I couldn't sleep, so I started driving around, and saw a Snocat, a snowmobile, and this fat guy was driving it... it was a Zen moment, and I couldn't be mad anymore" and 'Arnica Montana' "about being banged around in the tour bus. When we're on the road Billy drives, I do the cooking, feed the pets and homeschool the kids. We're like The Partridge Family, only more so".

The family moves around a lot. "We never seem to live anywhere for more than a year or two." After finishing *The Grotto*, Kristin and family left Rhode Island for Palm Springs, outside Los Angeles in Southern California. "It was wonderful to have a winter baby in the warm weather." Doesn't the continual upheaval drive her mad? "No, I love it. I have a low threshold for boredom."

– Martin Aston, 2003