

## Kelley Sutfenfield – Full Bio

Jazz Vocalist Kelley Sutfenfield is known for a unique interpretive style and adventurous repertoire, which draw inspiration equally from the past and present.

When asked about her influences, she recalls the music she heard “on the periphery” of her southern childhood: Johnny Cash, Bobbie Gentry and Patsy Cline to name a few. It was listening to those voices conjure seemingly real life events and sentiments that helped her find her way to the kind of offbeat jazz storytelling she does now.

Growing up in Virginia, Kelley performed as a soloist in school and church choirs, and won multiple state classical piano competitions. Piano provided a solid foundation since the age of six, but eventually proved too solitary a pursuit. She longed for communal musical experiences, and within a short time she was regularly appearing in musical theatre productions. This led to regional radio advertisements and television work. Later, while earning dual degrees in theatre arts and psychology, Kelley went on to win leading roles in high school and university productions.

One of these left a lasting impression that would reveal its significance over time. “I was in a production of *Oliver!* and I immersed myself in the music, particularly the song *Where is Love?*” says Kelley. “I never forgot the poignancy or the way the lyrics spoke to me. I loved the way those syllables and words felt in my mouth.” Not long after, Kelley moved to New York – for the same reason many people uproot themselves – she followed her heart. When she suddenly found herself alone in the one of the most formidable cities in the world, again the question *Where is Love?* resounded. “That,” says Kelley, “is really everyone’s question, isn’t it?”

Searching for ways to restore her own harmonic balance, she returned to the solace of classical music, but this time for voice. However, instead of identifying with the classical luminaries, she quickly found herself enamored of iconic jazz vocalists like Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and Sarah Vaughan. It was then that her musical priorities began an immediate and undeniable shift.

Her first regular gig was at a Moroccan restaurant, where she cultivated her interest in World Music. Soon Kelley had built a repertoire and a following, gravitating towards a more acoustic sound. She also took a detour from the Great American Songbook repertoire, developing a singular, contemporary style which honors the jazz tradition, while drawing from a deep well of good music she declines to classify by genre.

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## **Kelley Sутtenfield – Full Bio, continued**

With an increasing number of appearances came frequent requests for a CD. Between public demand and Kelley's own desire to document her present work and musical mood, she completed her debut recording *Where Is Love?* for Rhombus Records in 2009.

Co-Produced with Andrea Wolper, the recording is at once a diverse and cohesive collection of music derived from childhood favorites (*Charade* and *Ode to Billy Joe*); longtime staples of her performing repertoire (*Sugar*, *West Coast Blues*); and experiments (*Nature Boy*); all sharing a common thread. For example, "*Nature Boy* began with a specific image in mind" explains Kelley, "I did have some personal experiences that informed its delivery. And it was while studying Carnatic (South Indian) vocal music that I started to overlay those vocal patterns onto the melody. The music itself unfolded in the moment. This is one song that entered rehearsal 'uncooked,' but emerged as a collaborative, rapturous fusion in the studio."

Now, with a repertoire ranging from Brazilian standards to the Beatles and beyond, Kelley is known for original choices that create an evocative mood and clearly resonate with listeners. She performs regularly on the east coast, including her home base of New York City, as well as her former stomping grounds in Virginia. Future plans are taking her to Europe for concert performances.

***"...The greatest thing you'll ever learn is just to love and be loved in return..."***

*- From Nature Boy, by Eden Ahbez*

For more information, visit: [www.kelleysuttenfield.com](http://www.kelleysuttenfield.com).