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Kelley Sutenfield, Tony Romano perform ‘Among The Stars’ CD Release Concert



By: [Carol Banks Weber](#) AXS Contributor Nov 13, 2014 1 day ago
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Kelley Sutenfield

On the first album, New York City-based jazz vocalist [Kelley Sutenfield](#) went in guns blazing, with a full band covering her. Ah, but for Sutenfield's follow-up — the September 30, 2014 *Among The Stars* — she chose to bare her soul in an all-acoustic collection of eclectic and timeless covers with guitarist [Tony Romano](#). The daring move paid off.

Sutenfield's second CD has received plenty of *Jazz After Hours* airplay, [interview](#) opportunities, and those all-important reviews from [Jazz Weekly](#) and [Jazz Mostly](#). It's a fast riser on iTunes New Releases Jazz Chart, "Art of the Mix," since the drop.

On November 22, 7 p.m., at New York City's [Gallery MC](#), Sutenfield and Romano celebrate the release of *Among The Stars* in a proper fashion — with a live show. AXS checked in with her yesterday.

What goes into planning a CD release concert? Like with anything else, a CD release concert can be as little or as much work as you want to put into it. In keeping with the theme of the CD, this concert will be held in a nontraditional venue, and will require a little more work than showing up and playing at a club. But the good news is that I get to be in charge of creating the type of experience I want to share with the audience. And I've planned a reception to follow, so that I get to extend the interaction with the listeners, and have a few moments to join in the celebration as well.

What's been some of the highs and lows of recording this sophomore album and getting it out there? With most sophomore projects, the biggest hurdle to overcome is the curse of the expectations set by the first project.

I confess, it was daunting. I had to keep reminding myself that what I was attempting to do was different enough, and would be well received, and that kept things moving. That, and the tremendous support from those close to me, was all the reassurance I needed. Now that it's out in the world, I am very pleased with the final result, and truly astonished by the wonderful feedback received so far.

What's been the feedback from listeners and critics so far? For those that “get it,” and recognize it for the artistic statement that it was meant to be, the response has been extremely gratifying. The word “beautiful” comes up a lot in reviews, and that makes me happy. The feedback I find most validating is from the reviewers that cite it for our delivery of songs as they have never been heard before. And the feedback I personally find most meaningful is from those that refer to my sound as being distinct and special. I never want to make choices based on the promise of validation. I try to follow my own instincts, even if they veer off the main path. But a little acknowledgement at the finish line sure doesn't hurt.

Do you think gigging in New York City is an advantage? Without a doubt, performing in NYC has its advantages. It's an incredible training ground for artists. First, there are many places to perform and so many great musicians to work with. The downside is, well...there are so many places to perform and so many great musicians to work with! It's very competitive here, as well as very transient. People come and go, so it can be hard to secure a long-lasting gig, cultivate a loyal following, or even try and get musicians on the gig, as they may have commitments to their other groups. It's all worth it in the end, as I find [the exchange](#) of ideas – musical or otherwise – to be unlike anywhere else in the world.

What made you go with the Gallery MC for the CD release concert venue and not where you and Tony got your inspiration for the album, the weekly wine bar gig? What does Gallery MC uniquely offer to heighten the experience? As this CD is a bit outside the box, I sought out a nontraditional venue for the CD release concert. Gallery MC is a non-profit arts loft in Manhattan that features mixed media art exhibits, interactive installations, and classical and jazz concerts. It happens to be a terrific space with great acoustics, which will allow us to perform our music in a creative concert setting, with no pesky two-drink minimums.

What's on your set list? Are you planning anything interesting or different for the album preview? In this hour-long duo concert, we will perform about five songs from the CD, some of our “greatest hits,” and one or two new songs never performed before that almost made it on the CD.

When you perform live with Tony, describe the dynamic onstage. Is it quite different from being in the recording studio? Your second album really gets into the intimacy of a piece. What type of performer are you... Do you get off on natural occurrences, accidents, rather than trying to get every note perfect?

Performing live is a completely different animal from recording in the studio. It's a controlled and restricted environment, as opposed to the freedom and openness of the stage. Some core elements are present in both settings: emotion, tension, expression. However, the delivery is entirely different. I don't strive for perfection when performing live. I try to take chances and allow myself to be vulnerable. In the studio, for me, delivery is much more restrained, and on the money. Literally. But again, totally worth it. Both settings are invaluable learning experiences and key tools when honing one's craft.

Are you ready to write your own songs? What are your thoughts on this? I tend to be a late bloomer when it comes to these things. I have written some songs in the past that have never seen the light of day, and for good reason. But now I'm at a different place in life — I've recently been inspired to write again, and I'm looking forward to seeing what develops around that. Maybe another project? Who knows?!