

Blues

**DAWN OF TEXAS MUSIC** by Bob Gray

Dreamers seldom have a secure grip on reality – which is what makes many of them so dangerous. It's refreshing to talk to one who does. Katherine Dawn has a stranglehold on it, and given the tumult in her life – that's a good thing.

I've avidly followed KD's recent career – say the past six months or so. So many of her personal problems have come to a head in that time period that a lesser person would be moaning “woe is me” and wearing sackcloth and ashes. Katherine, by contrast, has managed to not only keep her good sense and stable expectations, but she's incorporated her troubles into her songs. One result is a Blues number that flatly flabbergasts me – *I Tried*.

I'm a big Etta James fan – and my favorite by her is *At Last*. In one of those strange twists that make life an adventure, Katherine's *I Tried* reminds me of Etta's song – even though the two songs approach the same subject from opposing experiences and viewpoints. *At Last* tells the story of a woman who has spent a lifetime looking and finally found a man she can love –  
At last, my love has come along.  
My lonely nights are over,  
And life is like a song...

Contrast that to Katherine's *I Tried* –  
I tried, I really tried to sit down yesterday.  
To write you a letter,  
But couldn't find the right words to say.  
Don't you know – I'm so sorry for what I didn't do,  
What I didn't do for you.

With Etta, we rejoice that she's “found a dream that (she) can speak to.” With Katherine, we mourn the missed chances we've had to prove the love we hold, “what we don't do enough of, what we don't care to say.”

As different in theme as the two songs are, the emotional result is an identical constriction of the heart. Of course, the common theme is human experience, albeit from different perspectives. This song, in fact many of Katherine's songs, speak to the human condition in profound ways.

**The Lightness of Dawn**

Benjamin Franklin said, “When you're finished changing, you're finished.” As true for Texas music as it is for any of us, KD seems to have taken the lesson to heart. Her latest release, the **Sugar Bowl Tour**, is a sharp break from her previous releases. And her next one, planned for release in the Fall of 2004, will be another – if anything, even more so. She has already written the songs, has actually been writing them for several years. They are undergoing her more mature scrutiny before recording to be certain they speak to the serious character of some popular icons – Mata Hari and Johnny Cash are two of the eclectic group she will showcase.

She and Ashlee Rose will be releasing a cover album of Christmas songs this winter. Look for it the end of November. And a side note: **Ashlee Rose**, who has become like another appendage for KD (Katherine routinely calls her the Angel Voice), sings *At Last* on her latest CD: **13**. Ashlee is so young that it's hard to credit her performance until you hear it. I have, in fact, never heard anyone else even try to do this song. And the first thought is, "What does a thirteen year old girl know concerning the difficulty of finding a good man to love?" Nevertheless, she does a fair job on the song, and I have to hand it to her for having the courage to even try.

Members of the band on the Sugar Bowl CD include **Wave Harless** on percussion, **Skip Luke** on bass, **Rod Bancuch** (which he publicly spells **Bankoo** to avoid confusion on the pronunciation) on lead guitar, and KD's husband of twelve years, **Darrell Hicks** on drums. Guest performers are **Ashlee Rose**, **Monty "Guitar" Taylor**, **Dustin and Katy**, **Sean Palen**, and **JR Castro**.

### **Dawn's Early Light...**

When you start writing and performing at age nine, you can have a lifetime of experience by forty. And when you are recognized and encouraged for your talent by people like Big Bill Lister and Ginny Lawrence – well, your future work is pretty much cut out for you.

And I'm leaving out all kinds of stuff here; the sheer number of charitable projects to which she's contributed her talent, contests won, venues played (5 CD releases prior to this one), tempestuous private life, famous friends and mentors, the invaluable help she's been to other musicians – would require five more pages. She will be publishing a book soon, but until then, take my word for it - she works. Hard.

There are facets of this woman's personality that continually astound me. Hard-headed and soft-hearted, she can go from a fun-loving young girl to a gravely serious businesswoman in the blink of an eye. And, weirdly, they are both her, through and through. She's had a whirlwind life that contains an ample supply of disappointments. Yet, when she's in a playful mood (which she almost always is when on stage), you'd never guess that her existence has been anything but a pleasant breeze on the way to stardom.

Katherine is a serious writer and performer. As I said at the top, her realism is amazing. And her music can be positively heart stopping. If you're looking for a Texas musician with knowledge, skill, talent, and a way of expressing your own deepest thoughts and doubts in an instantly appreciable and apprehensible manner, access her website at [www.katherinedawn.com](http://www.katherinedawn.com).

I'm convinced that Katherine Dawn will be a permanent part of the Texas Music Heritage. If you haven't done so already – give her ten minutes. She will become a necessary part of your own.