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Tara Slone

By Carol Johnstone

Rock 'n Roll Warrior



Left: Tara Slone at three—showing the signs of a Dharma Brat. Right: The grown-up warrior

IT'S NOT A STRAIGHT LINE from opera singer to rock star but Tara Slone can tell you how it's done. Daughter of Eric Slone and Glenys Pietrykowska, Tara began taking voice lessons at age 12, and those led to a university scholarship studying opera. But as she says in her web bio, "I quickly realized that although I loved singing, I didn't want to spend every minute of my life living and breathing opera." And so an abrupt turn: "I left school, pierced my nose, got a tattoo, moved to Montreal and joined a rock band."

Tara spent two years at Concordia University studying acting; she started getting paid work, starring in the forgettable classics *Psychopath* and *Night of the Demons 3* ("it's a really bad movie, really, really bad"). "[*Demons*] was just one of those hellish shoots," she said, "long, cold nights, an (illegal) co-ed trailer to sleep in—but hard to resist at \$1,000/day for 20 days work." Later, she got a part in the

action series, *La Femme Nikita*, playing the techno-nerd Gail for three or four episodes, which she said was a lot of fun. She'd do it again.

In 1996, Tara answered an ad for a vocalist in a rock 'n' roll band and made an "instant connection" with drummer Tony Rabalao, guitarist Thomas Payne, and bassist Tom McKay. The group, Joydrop, was signed by Tommy Boy, a hip-hop producer for bands like Capone n' Noreaga, Pimpadelic and Queen Latifah.

Joydrop's lyrics are sly, insightful, direct, vivid, lyrical, and "in yo face," with a back-handed sense of humor. For their first album, Tara wrote "Cocoon," a kind of "it's my cocoon and I'll cry if I want to," kind of song. As she says "I sang it from the point of view of knowing I'm full of shit."

Their song "Beautiful" (written by drummer Tony Rabalao) made it onto *Billboard Magazine's* Top 20 List.

(Profile, continued from page 12)

*If I was beautiful like you
I would never be at fault
I'd walk in the rain between the rain drops
Bringing traffic to a halt
But that would never be
that would never never be
'cause I'm not beautiful like you
I'm beautiful like me."*

Because it's in her bio, Tara says she gets a lot of questions about her Buddhist practice: "How can you be in a rock band if you're a Buddhist?" "Oh, you drink?" or "You eat meat?" A few years ago, while she was on the road, she had an interview with the Sakyong, who gave her some practices to do. She said, "he was actually really helpful. He reminded me I could be of tremendous help, and an example of being a practitioner out in the public eye. It was a good way for me to look at it, because I was really looking at it from the point of view that I was terribly miserable. I missed being at home and it was just awful and why was I doing this? I would like to be a lot more open and expressive about the fact that I do practice Buddhism, because I think I could help people. I can reach a pretty broad and large audience."

Tara says that going on tour actually provides her time for practice: "because of the really rigid schedule, I have quite a bit of free time." She adds, "being on the road is kind of boring. Very repetitive. And the energy you get off an audience only goes so far. It doesn't matter how great people tell you that you are, at the end of the day, you still go into a little bunk in a bus to sleep."

Asked if she minded being called a "dharma brat," Tara says, "I don't mind at all. I am a dharma brat. I mean, I hope I'm not too much of a brat anymore. But we get some special treatment sometimes. We had an audience with the Sakyong at Kalapa Assembly and he told us how much of a responsibility we have to this community and that it's our time to take our seats now."

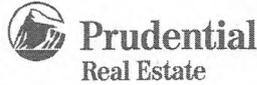
She says, "I'm actually envious of the younger sangha kids who are [going to seminary] when they're 20, because they have the time and space. I really wish I'd had that connection then, but I just didn't."

Joydrop has just finished its second CD, *Viberate*, which is due out in July 2001. Look for it in a record store near you.

Carol Johnstone is a freelance writer and graphic artist in Halifax.

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