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An Interview With Katie Melua



Katie Melua didn't always want to be a singer or songwriter. The Georgia (former USSR) born Melua had ideas of becoming a politician or historian but that all changed when at the age of fifteen she entered a TV talent competition singing Mariah Carey's "Without You". Not only did she win the competition but soon found herself with her own project entitled "Call Off The Search". The project scored top ten positions throughout Europe and became certified gold in Holland, Hong Kong and Switzerland, Platinum in Denmark, New Zealand and Australia, Double Platinum in Germany, Ireland, Norway and South Africa and received the IFPI double Platinum Award for two million European sales. In March 2005 'Call Off The Search' hit the number one spot in Denmark, a year after its initial release and then became a top five album in Japan. If that weren't enough, Katie was awarded Best International Newcomer at Germany's ECHO Awards in April of 2005 and in Britain Katie was the highest selling female artist in 2004.

Epiphone's Don Mitchell recently spoke with the twenty-two year old international superstar.

EPI: Congratulations on your success as an artist. We all have seen the results of your hard work and talent with your numerous awards and sales certifications but tell me about your early musical life. What are your musical roots and who inspired you to become a musician?

KATIE: Thank you very much. My dad was actually the one to inspire me. Even though he is a doctor, he always encouraged me to do what I wanted to do. Another big inspiration was Freddie Mercury. I remember watching a really grainy video of Queen performing at Live Aid when I was six years old and being in complete awe of him.

EPI: Was there anyone who inspired you to specifically pick up the guitar?

KATIE: I started playing guitar in my second year of music school mainly because I got fed up with depending on testosterone filled teenagers who played very loud guitars and drums at my gigs. I just wanted to be more in control of the whole sound. If I had to pick a person though it would probably be Eva Cassidy. I loved the freshness of her sound and the simplicity of just a voice and guitar.

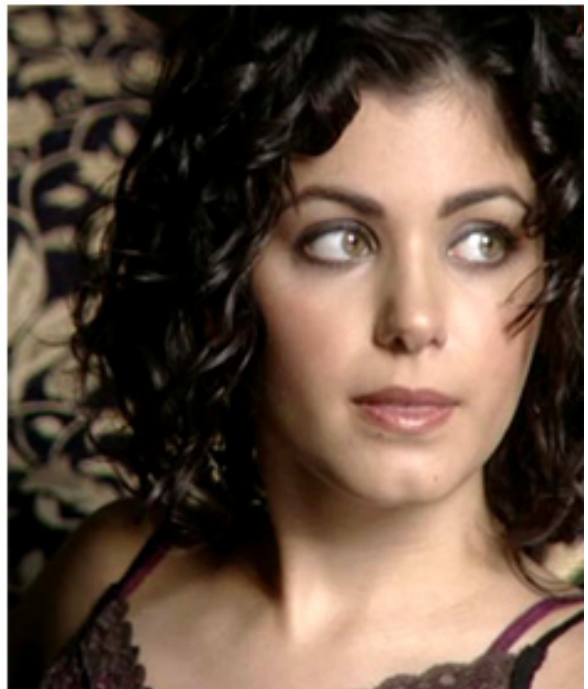
EPI: You mentioned that your dad was a doctor by trade but is he or any of your other family members musically inclined?

KATIE: Coming from Georgia, everyone is a musician at heart even if you're not. Both my parents studied music and my mum had a band in the late 70's but they both ended up going into the medical profession.

EPI: You have attained enormous success at a young age. How old were you when you first started performing?

KATIE: Music was always been a hobby of mine so you could say I started quite young, at about seven years old but it didn't really become serious for me until I was sixteen.

EPI: At that point did you realize that you were destined to be a musician?



KATIE: Yes. At sixteen I got my first computer and bought some music sequencing software for a small studio at home where I would write and record my own demos. I'd be in my bedroom all day recording if I wasn't at school. I loved the feeling of just having written a song and that was when I decided I wanted to make this a career. I have to say though, I didn't know then that I'd become predominantly a singer songwriter.

EPI: Good songs are a key to any artists success. Tell me about your first song and how you developed from there.

KATIE: It was a song called Ashes to Ashes and Dust to Dust, a blatant David Bowie rip off! (laughs) It was about a wife who had murdered her husband and was burying him. I had recorded and programmed it on my computer and remember thinking it was really great at the time. Now I listen to it and realize it's pretty bad. I'm glad I went through that period of writing on the computer because later when I started writing on the guitar I suddenly found that I only had my voice and the guitar to work with. I ended up writing better songs as they had to sound good in that simple format.

EPI: You attended the Brit School for Performing Arts. What was the biggest thing you learned there?

KATIE: The best thing about the Brit School was meeting other musicians, many of which are still my best friends. It was a great time and we were able to introduce each other to many different kinds of music. I discovered Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell through my friends there.

EPI: How important do you think it is for an aspiring artist to receive formal training in music?



talent few can do well.

KATIE: I think it is a good idea to get a general background in music. I enjoyed learning about music history and theory and music technology but I know that not all musicians do, so for some it might be best to just start gigging and gaining experience rather than trying to learn things you're not interested in. I also think that while there are many things that can be taught, some things can never be taught. For example, writing a good song is something that has to come from within you. Expressing yourself through melody and lyric is a

EPI: Your debut album "Call Off The Search" has seen unbelievable success. What was it like to suddenly be in the same category with Dido, Nora Jones and the likes?

KATIE: I was surprised more than anything and being in the same category as Dido and Norah Jones didn't really cross my mind at that stage. I was still trying to deal with the madness of it all at that point.

EPI: Do you think success has changed you in any way?

KATIE: Yeah, it probably has. I'd like to say for the better though, although I would say that, wouldn't I? (Laughs)! I think it has made me a bit more confident than I was before.

EPI: You had the honor of performing at Nelson Mandela's 46664 concert. What was that experience like?

KATIE: That concert was probably the highlight of my career so far. not only did I get to play at such an amazing event in front of Nelson Mandella but I also got to perform with Queen's Brian May and Roger Taylor, my idols since I was six years old.

EPI: Your latest project "Piece by Piece" has several self penned tunes on it. Do you feel like this record is your best?

KATIE: Well, to be honest, I hate it when artists say "this is my best record" about their last one, so I'll try not to go down that route. I do think this is the best record I could have made at this time in my life. I also think "Call Off The Search" was the best album I could have made at eighteen but I don't think I've made the best album of my career yet. Hopefully that's still to come.



EPI: We are thrilled that you have been playing Epiphone Masterbilt acoustics for some time now. When did you first discover them?

KATIE: About three years ago. It was my first really good guitar and was amazing. It felt different than anything I'd played before and the sound was so rich and smooth that I had to have it. Most importantly, I felt like I could write songs on it. I use the guitar a bit like a note pad for songs and my Masterbilts have held up really well. I wrote most of the songs from the second album on my Epiphone.

EPI: Thanks Katie and we look forward to seeing you in the US soon.

KATIE: Thank you.

For more on Katie Melua visit www.KatieMelua.com.



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