

Sept 15 Wednesday

Kristen Kelly and the Modern Day Drifters

For most people the essential elements of life include things such as oxygen, water, and food. Yet, for the Kristen Kelly and the Modern Day Drifters, music is equally as vital. The Drifters, whose current album contains the fitting title of *The Highway Is My Home*, are a collection of passionate musicians who have a firm belief in the band concept and yearn to create classic American music. With members from all corners of the country, the band is full of a variety of influences and styles that range from stone cold country to hard rock. The brand of music they have developed is one that stems from the roots of soul and southern rock, to the front porch of the country. Lyrically, the tales the Drifters have to tell are influenced by the hard miles traveled down highways both literal and figurative.

The band is fronted by a dynamic and special lead vocalist in Kristen Kelly. Kelly's ability to deliver any style of vocal is the groundwork for which the Modern Day Drifters are founded on. Growing up in a musical family, she draws inspiration from a variety of influences, be it country pioneers such as Emmylou Harris, modern blues wailers such as Susan Tedeschi, or classic bands such as Fleetwood Mac and The Eagles. As a dreamer steeped in the realities of the musical education she received from her respected musical mentors at McLennan Community College, Kelly knew exactly what type of band she wanted to form.

Kelly sought a full sound with equal contributions from each member in writing sessions, production meetings, and stage shows. Her career got on the fast track after she co-wrote "Down in Flames" with Brandon Jenkins and Stoney LaRue, as she quickly became a sought after songwriting partner and harmony vocalist. Kelly yearned to do more than just be someone's cowriter, and together with a friend, they began to perform as an acoustic duo around her hometown. The music they were creating was magical and she began to write and perform constantly. Kelly soon decided she needed to round out the musical vision she'd had in her head all those years. Enter Derrick Dutton, a guitar guru known across Texas and beyond for his blues inspired myriad of tones and sounds. Dutton grew up in Portland, Oregon, the son of a southern rock lead guitarist. After a stint in the Navy, he landed in Texas for college and quickly immersed himself in the Texas blues scene. Through years of gigging, Dutton has been able to take his genetic guitar gifts to the next level. Joining Dutton to help create the Drifters signature twin guitar attack is Joshua Roberts, a talented guitarist who has been playing professionally since the age of 15, most notably in the highly successful jam band Willis Brownstone. The formidable rhythm section is comprised of Brady Miller on drums and Jimmy Kinerd holding down the low end of things on the bass.

This amalgam of musical backgrounds and strengths has combined to create something totally unique in the Texas/Red Dirt scene. That unique something is a powerful and unique sound that is garnering MDD praise across the country. With sounds and influences that cause Ray Charles jams to intermingle with the Allman Brothers at live shows, the Drifters have created an original sound that has been compared to the Black Crowes backing Susan Tedeschi while she sings the songs of Patty Griffin. That description means Kelly's vision is now a reality. With a live album to be hitting the marketplace soon, the band has been hitting the road hard over the past year, playing any stage that would have them. What started in Kelly's head, transitioned to garage rehearsals and ended up at esteemed venues such as Gruene Hall and Cheatham Street Warehouse, in addition to festivals such as Larry Joe Taylor's Music Fest and SXSW. Each gig is now a musical sermon, a redemptive call to arms that attempts to shake contemporary music out of the homogenized rut it often finds itself in.