



Kari Lynch

Kari Lynch Band

An Interview by Todd Selleck



Okay, I will start this interview by asking the reader a question:

How do you when you've "made it" as a performer, singer, song writer and musician? Consider that you have released albums, EP's and have several videos and you have toured nationally. Is all that enough to suggest you've "made it.?" By most accounts, I would say yes. And when you open for Miranda Lambert, Toby Keith, Trace Adkins, Pistol Annies, Alabama, Big & Rich, and Ashley McBryde that conforms your success..

Yeah. No pressure there, right?

That's a very, very short list of how successful and respected Grand Rapids native Kari Lynch is. Kari now lives in Nashville where her compelling songwriting that is wrapped in her golden, smoky voice has made her a favorite of some of the world's most recognized artists, but that's outside of her extensive and dedicated fan base who hangs on to each note she sings and grasps every word she writes and clutches it close to their heart. Kari Lynch's music is candy for your ears and a warm hug from a good friend when you need it the most. She has a vast catalog of songs that she has written and performs with a group of talented musicians.

Kari Lynch is not just a solo act; she is also the lead singer of the Alt. Country/Rock band Kari Lynch Band (KLB) which is comprised of: Travis Radaz-Lead Electric/Vocals, Eric Ellis- Rhythm Guitar/ Vocals, Sam Corey-Bass/Vocals and Brian V.-Drums. Each musician has the same impressive list of opening for some of the most famous artists in the world alongside Kari, and if you get a chance to see KLB in concert you will immediately experience their charisma and how they immediately connect with the audience the moment they walk on stage.

Oh, and one more indication/hint that you've "made it" as a performer: people line after your performance to get your autograph. To achieve that much success, it shows how engaging Kari, and her band are in concert. Her fans realize it is not just a concert, it is an experience. I'm hoping to capture some of that Kari Lynch mag in this interview and share it with the readers.

TS: Your roots are in Clare and Grand Rapids; Michigan is that where The Kari Lynch Band formed?

KL I've been singing and writing songs almost my entire life, truly. I started writing songs when I was about 7 years old and started performing soon after. I performed anywhere I could, school, karaoke at the little bar inside the local bowling alley in my hometown of Clare, MI, for friends and family. I was always singing, always performing, and always thinking about getting to sing, play and writing music for a living.

When I graduated high school, I moved to Grand Rapids, MI to attend Grand Valley State University where I received graduated with a writing degree, and also studied music and theater. I formed The Kari Lynch Band in Grand Rapids, MI - way back in 2009. I had played a lot of open mics around Grand Rapids and then started booing acoustic shows in several bars and coffee shops around Grand Rapids. I played acoustic shows 2-4 times a week for about 2 years when I started getting asked to play larger events, festivals, shows..etc., and I knew it was time to put a band together and start bringing my show to the next level. I met all of the initial members of KLB around Grand Rapids in the music scene.

I was actually playing an acoustic show with my friend Matt (who played rhythm guitar) one Wednesday night at Mcfadden's (which actually doesn't exist anymore) and Jeffrey Niemeier (who would become my fiddle player) walked in because he liked what he had heard out on the street walking by. He ended up staying for the rest of the show, we chatted afterward, and he invited me to come out and see his cover band, who were playing later that week.

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KL: The electric player, Ryder and drummer, Sam from that cover band, later became the electric player and drummer in my band. We picked up a couple bass player (Chris and Jake) along the way and The Kari Lynch Band (an alt-county / rock project) was born. A few players have changed here and there throughout the years, I've been so fortunate to play with the best musicians and people, many who are still some of my best friends.

For the last several years or so, I've been playing with the same set of guys, with the exception of our current bass player, Sam Corey, who replaced our last bass player of about 7 years (Mat Churchill) this summer. The other current members of KLB are Brian V. (Drums), Travis Radaz (electric guitar) and Eric Ellis (Rhythm guitar). We also sometimes have keys (Tate Radaz) with us as well as pedal steel (Drew Vanderveen). I also write and release a solo project as well (labeled as just "Kari Lynch") and I collaborate with a number of fantastic musicians and people on that project as well. Like I said,-

I know and get to make music and share some truly amazing experiences with some pretty incredible people and I don't take any of it for granted.



TS: Who was the first major artist/group you opened for-were you nervous?

KL: I do get nervous for shows sometimes, but the stage feels so much like home to me; it's a very comfortable and natural place, that the nerves don't last once I'm on stage. When I first started playing out, I would get really nervous before big shows, nervous that I was going to forget lyrics or mess up, and I would just reel through all of the worst-case scenarios that could happen in my head. I would put a TON of pressure on myself because it meant so much to me to be the best performer. It still obviously means so much to me and I want the show to be GREAT, but I've learned how to manage that pressure in a much better way. I don't get nervous that I am going to mess up anymore.

If I'm nervous for anxious before a show, it's usually because I'm concerned with a show detail I've been worried about, rather than the actual performance (i.e. - we are running late, a piece of gear is acting up, something got overlooked during the show advance...etc.). I don't get nervous about the performance aspect anymore. Maybe it's a confidence thing that has developed over time playing hundreds and hundreds of shows for so many different types of crowds, but I know my show, I trust myself and my bandmates, I believe in my songs and I'm confident in all of it.

I stopped getting so nervous when I stopped putting so much pressure on myself to play an absolutely perfect show because I convinced myself that's what people expected from me.

It takes the fun out of it looking at it that way and it took me some years and experience to learn that. At the end of the day, I don't think listeners are looking for perfection; they're looking for connection and connection come really naturally to me.

I think most people want authenticity, not perfection

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KL: I'd rather be myself on stage, mess up and all, than to be a robot putting on a "perfect" performance, you know? I think connection happens when you can peel back the layers and show people who you are because it gives them permission to do the same, and then we can all experience that moment together in the realest and fullest way. It's weird, now if I'm having a performance day where my nerves are getting the better of me for any reason, it only ever lasts until the moment I step on stage.

There is a really beautiful calm and comfort that falls over me the minute I get on stage and I'm thankful for that. The stage sincerely is home to me. It's a place where I can do the thing I'm meant to do.

The first time I opened a show for a major label artist was way back in 2009. I was nervous, but I think the nerves for me were mostly nervous energy. I played The Intersection's main stage opening for Bombshell (who were a country duo at the time). I only played an acoustic show of this one, and it was such a wonderful night and a great learning experience. It was my first real taste of getting in front of a large crowd, selling merchandise, having a lineup at my Merch table after the show (which was wild to me). A funny thing that happened during this show was that the acoustic guitar went out (the sound just popped and stopped) on the first strum), so we awkwardly stood there for a few seconds waiting for the sound tech to figure out what was going on, so I decided to just sing Patsy Cline's "Crazy" a cappella to fill the time.

What could have felt like a disaster, actually turned into a special and memorable moment with one of the crowds singing along with me. I think it set the tone that anything can happen, and the rest of the show honestly went great. A lot of people came up to me that night and said that they were happy it happened because it was one of their favorite parts of the night, that was really nice to hear and a good lesson to expect the unexpected and just roll with it.





TS: What inspires you to write and perform music?

KL: As mentioned, I started writing music when I was about 7 years old. I loved music. I know very young that I didn't just like music, it was a part of me. I heard music differently than kids around me, you know? I felt it differently and had a natural ear and knack for picking up melodies, putting phrases together and figuring out how to play songs on piano by ear. Words working with melody has intrigued me since I was very young. Writing was definitely my coping mechanism when I was younger. It could have been anything, and for whatever reason it was grabbing a notebook and writing for me, and a lot of that writing just came to me in melody and had a flow to it. I've kept writing all these years because I truly love it and I need it. I write to figure out life. It's just always been easier for me to understand myself and the world around me, and to sort through my feelings by sitting down and writing about it. Practicing my craft and working to always become a better writer and songwriter is something that drives me. The connection that I get to have with others through music inspires me. The fact that I can connect with a perfect stranger through something I've written that something I have written holds a very special and important place in their life, is just the most incredible thing to me. That inspires me to keep writing. I keep performing because I still love it and it's still so much fun and so fulfilling for me. If it ever stops being those things, I'll know it's time for me to stop performing.

TS: Do you follow a process or ritual before a performance to get rid of nerves or performance anxiety?

KL: I do sort of. There are things that I do before every show like to warm up, or a certain order I do things in..those things are more done that way just because that's the way I've learned to do them over the years in a way that works for me.

But something that I do before EVERY single show I play is sing through the first verse and chorus of the first song I am playing in my head right before I go on stage. Haha, it's totally mental at this point, but it calms me down and I've just been doing it for so long that I HAVE to do it now before every show.

There's also a hand motion that I do during the first song. I will never tell anyone what it is, ha-ha, it's just for me. Only I know I do it and it's silly, but it's one of those things that I am just superstitious about at this point because I've done it during the first song, every show, for over ten years.

KLB also has two band mascots (weird little animal toys we won in a claw machine) that we have on stage at every show. Just a silly thing.

Before KLB shows, myself, Brian (drummer) and Travis (lead guitar) always have to come together for a minute and we each have a phrase we say to each other (it's a secret so I can't share) and I always have to give the guys each a high five, in a particular order, ending with Brian and a double high five, right before the show beings.

Those are just some fun things we do that are ours.



TS: What is your creative process for creating new music?

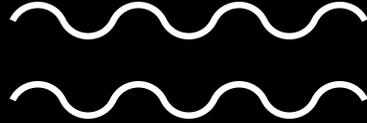
KL: It honestly varies. I have ideas for songs and get melodies every single day. I'm not being sarcastic, it's always on. I have thousands of recordings on my phone, little lines jotted down in my notes app on my phone or in one of the many notebooks I have. It's always, always on.

I couldn't turn it off if I wanted to. But sitting down to work through those ideas is a mother story. I need calm for that. I write best when my life has some calm to it and I have time to process my thoughts and work through ideas. It's hard sometimes when we are traveling so much or life is busy and blurry because my brain needs time to be able to sort through my thoughts. So, when I have some time off, I'll pull out those notes and recordings and sometimes pick an idea (depending on my mood) that I want to work on. Other times, I'm going through something, and I just need to write about it right then because I need to get out or sort through an emotion. In those moments,

I'll sit down and often write the entire song, sometimes in a matter of 30 minutes, start to finish. I write very stream of conscience, so often I'll just write, write, write and then go through and sort it out. Most songs have several different verses before I land on the ones I want to use. I'd say when I write solo, I generally will work on an idea for 2-4 hours to get it right and then I listen to the recording I made and make changes here and there until the song and every lyric feels complete. I don't know how to explain it, but I just know when it's finally right. Lyrics come to be often attached to some kind of melody, so there's always a place to start. Sometimes I have one word that I am working with or writing a song around. Sometimes it's just a phrase, sometimes it's a melody or a repeating word or phrase over a melody that starts the idea.

It really just depends. For me, I'm always just trying to explain the feeling I have in words and a melody. Sometimes it comes easy and sometimes not so much.

No matter the process, my goal is always to say what I need/want to say, as honestly as I am feeling it.



TS: If you hadn't become a singer (musician) what would you be doing?

KL: I never had a backup career, ha-ha. I didn't really let myself have a backup and to be honest, there's really not anything else I ever wanted to do outside of the entertainment industry. If I wasn't doing music, I would mostly likely be acting, working, or writing in film or I'd be a writer with more focus on writing short stories and longer novels. Acting is a huge love of mine.

I don't get to do it as much as I would like, because the music industry keeps me so busy, but I'd like to make more time for it and make more time for other forms of writing (outside of songwriting).

I currently work on all sides of the music industry, so I have an ingesting perspective. I am a performer, but I also do show production, show advancing and Production management, so I really do get a fill of so many sides of the music/entertainment industry.

I love working on all sides of the industry from producing music, to show production to writing, to performing, to film and theater. The arts and getting to connect with people in a creative way is where it's at and where it will always be for me.

As long as I get to do that, I'll be happy





TS: Kari Lynch is a very talented singer, musician, and engaging performer. Her band is dynamic and when you go to a Kari Lynch concert you will not just attend but experience a very personal and one of a kind moment that will be etched in your memory for a lifetime.

Thank you, Kari, for creating beautiful and endearing music and for taking time to do this interview.

[Visit Kari's website](#) to see what projects she's working on: Kari Lynch And be sure to visit the [KLB Website](#) to get a glimpse of the KLB experience.

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