

Pop Talk: Alison Krauss - May her spirits move you

by *George_Varga*

Bluegrass and country music champion Alison Krauss has won more Grammy Awards - 20 and counting - than any other female artist in any genre. Chances are she'll collect another trophy or two after her highly anticipated duo album with former Led Zeppelin singer Robert Plant comes out later this year.

ALISON KRAUSS - 'If you're in this business and are lucky enough to be somewhat of an inspiration to another person, you have a responsibility,' says Union Station leader Alison Krauss (center). 'It's not about changing who you are as a person, but about how you carry yourself as a human being.' CNS Photo courtesy of Rounder Records. But Krauss, who was just 18 when she earned her first Grammy in 1990, still regards each new award and accolade with awe and gratitude.

"I don't know how you could get jaded," said the angelic-voiced singer and violinist.

"Every time you make a record, it's like the first and last one you'll ever make. That's what it feels like to me. You get so wrapped up in that, at least I do, and you don't focus on anything but that," Krauss said. "Then you put that away and move on to the next thing. With something like a Grammy, you think: 'Wow, somebody liked what we are doing!' It's a wonderful feeling to know people are listening to what you do, and that it's not about anything (else)."

If that sounds like a polite way for Krauss to say she focuses entirely on her music, not her image, it is.

In fact, this 35-year-old maverick shuns the spotlight when she's not on stage, where she makes sure that her virtuoso band members are prominently featured throughout. And whether she's performing a pristine ballad, delivering a rousing fiddle tune, or working with such disparate artists as Ralph Stanley, Brad Paisley or Bad Company, her goal is always to capture the emotional essence in every song she does.

"'Duty' isn't the right word, but I follow what is inspiring because then there's truth in what you do," Krauss said.

"Raising people's spirits, that's the magical part about art itself. ... The whole thing with music, for me, is that it's manipulating emotion, and it manipulates mine. A piece of music will manipulate me into feeling a certain way. And there are times when I can't even deal with a piece of music because it moves me so much."

Moving people with her richly evocative singing and fiddle playing has been a hallmark of Krauss' career since her debut album, 1987's "Too Late to Cry," was released when she was 15. Her impetus for making music now is the same.

"When I think about music and songs, and about why a song was so moving and ripped my heart out - the passionate part of music - that's stayed pretty similar. I think I can just articulate better now why that is, instead of just (saying) 'I like it,'" said Krauss, whose current tour is in support of her album "A Hundred Miles or More: A Collection."

Krauss, who produced the first two albums for San Diego's Nickel Creek, doesn't distinguish between different musical styles that she likes.

So while some observers might be surprised about her upcoming album with Robert Plant, the two singers' shared love of Celtic music, country, rock and blues makes their collaboration seem perfectly logical. Their as-yet-untitled duo album will be followed by a joint tour.

"We really got along right away, and we're very similar in how passionate we are about music and why we love this and that (style)," Krauss said of Plant. "It was a very nice, natural match. Because of the way we think about music, I think the record turned out very interesting, and different, for both of us."

Will Krauss have to buy a new stage wardrobe for her tour with Plant?

"I don't think so," she said with a hearty laugh. "I hope not!"

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