

Rose Cora Perry: The Truth Untold [Interview]

Earlier this month WomensCalendar had the sincere pleasure of sitting down for a long-overdue chat with dear friend and critically-acclaimed Canadian musician, media personality and model, Rose Cora Perry.

Fast forward to today and we're delighted to share a bit about the magnificent journey she's been captaining over the better part of the last decade, where she's at *right now* and a taste of what's on the horizon for Rose Cora Perry & The Truth Untold.



Rose Cora Perry & The Truth Untold (📷: Mystery Man Photography)

WC: Hi Rose, thank you so much for joining WomensCalendar for an interview! We've been fans of your music since first listening on WomensRadio nearly ten years ago, and can only imagine how busy you've been in the meantime! Can you help catch us up on your journey over the last decade?

RCP: When we last spoke (circa 2010), I had just released my debut solo album, "Off Of the Pages" and was embarking on my first acoustic singer/songwriter-style tour. As the former frontwoman of two successful rock bands, this was quite a drastic change from what I was used to which proved equally rewarding as it did challenging.

I've always felt that the best musicians are the ones who push themselves to try new things and allow their musical sensibility to evolve organically. Of course, given that my former projects which positioned me as a "rock frontwoman" were beloved, I did experience some backlash when I ventured out in a new direction. Not everyone "got" it and some tried to pigeonhole me, claiming that I would never surpass the success of my former bands.

Despite this, I knew what was right in my heart and due to both personal and professional circumstances, it didn't feel authentic or genuine to me to continue to express myself artistically in the same ways as before. I wasn't the same person; therefore my art wasn't going to come out the same way.

After my debut solo release and up until 2016, I switched gears away from touring heavily and instead decided to explore different artistic avenues of interest. I became a TV host for two local programs, gave back to my community by volunteering as an Emcee for various non-for-profit causes, conducted guest lectures on the music industry for several educational institutes, began a new column series entitled, "Psych Your Mind" (which continues to be syndicated) as well as tried my hand at acting in short films as well as made my on-stage theatrical debut.

I enjoyed exploring these different avenues which were outside of my comfort zone and challenging myself in new ways. But, it didn't take long before the call to create more music came and I began work on my sophomore solo album, "Onto the Floor".

Released in the Fall of 2016, "Onto the Floor" is my proudest work to date. I feel it's the first time in my career that I've successfully merged my love of rock'n'roll with my classical roots and I feel the songwriting reflects a new maturity and depth not previously seen on my other albums.

I worked on "Onto the Floor" for several years before I felt it was ready to unleash onto the world and throughout the album's development, it took many twists and turns along the way. When it was finally completed, I realized touring on the material with just an acoustic guitar in hand would not do it justice. So, I formed my latest project known as "The Truth Untold" in which I'm accompanied by the tremendous talents of Tyler Randall on drums and Amber Gorham on bass.

I'm extremely excited and humbled by the success of "Onto the Floor": my Music Video trilogy series for its first three singles has won awards, I've received artistic grants for the first time ever in my career, my first single, "Away I Go" was named within the top most streamed/downloaded releases by indie artists across Canada and my band has already had some incredible touring opportunities I could only dream of including: performing at the legendary Whisky a Go Go, opening for SmashMouth and being selected as the only Canadian act to perform at Summer NAMM in Nashville.

This year, we decided to build on the couple of successes we've already seen in the US marketplace by embarking on our "Canadian Invasion" tour. In the Fall, we hope to release our first ever band E.P. which will reflect the sound of "The Truth Untold" with contributions from all members of my band.

WC: What would you say is the driving force behind your work as an artist? Where do you feel this might take you in the future?

RCP: I am a musician because I simply love music. It's a part of my identity and without expressing myself musically in some capacity, I don't feel complete, fulfilled or like myself. I never actively made the decision to just wake up one day and write songs. They came to me. They always have. It's an organic process and simply a part of who I am and how I express myself.

Today's music industry climate is particularly challenging as many forms of revenue that musicians used to be able to rely on no longer exist. Moreover, the music industry (entertainment industry, in general) is increasingly being dictated by fewer and fewer mega-companies at the top due to corporation conglomeration. There is a lot of uncertainty at present in terms of how things will unfold over the next couple of years, but I've never had any delusions that it was "easy" to "make it". With that said, my end goal is and always has been this: I make music to inspire people.

As much as it'd be awesome to rock a packed stadium, in my view, you are just as much of a rockstar if you're playing to packed venues or festivals wherein people are so touched by your work that they are singing along with every word. I think that's all any of us can hope for - to inspire and move people with our music. Whether big or small crowds, it all makes a difference.

WC: This summer marks an exciting yet perhaps bittersweet moment for both yourself and music loving festival-goers, as the Vans Warped Tour's legacy is coming to an end...but not without you first gracing the stage in Toronto during the tour's only Canadian 2018 appearance. Might you be able to share a bit about your feelings toward being selected for this performance? ...the Warped Tour at large?

RCP: I (along with my bandmates) am truly honoured to be able to take part in such a momentous occasion, especially as it will mark almost a decade since I took to the Warped stage with my former band, Anti-Hero. We are truly grateful for the incredible opportunity to be able to play amongst all of the amazing bands booked on this year's final farewell tour and we hope to do Canada proud.

As for this year being Warped's last? I think the conclusion of Warped reflects what's going on in the music industry in general - that we're in a period of flux and unpredictability. A lot of well-known venues in the US and Canada have equally closed their doors and Warped is only one of several festivals that won't be returning.

Is it bittersweet? Absolutely, but it's also a reflection of changing demographics and concert-going habits. Without getting into the "when I was your age" argument, the reality is that technology and the internet - as much as they've been advantageous in some areas - have been extremely detrimental to an appreciation of LIVE music.

In Canada, I recently read a stat that out of the Top 10 so-called "BEST" festivals held in our country, 8 of them feature EDM and DJs only, meaning that to some the idea of "seeing" a "concert" in person is nothing more than watching some dude or dudette set up a laptop on stage and hit play. THAT experience is obviously EXTREMELY different from a physical, emotional and mental stance than witnessing someone like the late great Chris Cornell pour out his heart and soul in song, and "feeling" the music and his emotion as much as you are hearing it.

Don't even get me started on livestreaming. Why would you actively create a way for people to avoid going to the physical venue in order to get the experience and then wonder why tickets aren't selling? *Scratches head*

We also live in the age of social media which has lead to:

1. Everyone thinking they're worthy of "celebrity" resulting in a LESSER appreciation for those with legitimate talent
2. The vast majority of the population either taking in experiences through a LENS (rather than their senses) OR WORST, people constantly giving feed updates on what they're doing in order to gain popularity and attention INSTEAD of actually taking in the experience themselves

Again BOTH phenomena result in LIVE MUSIC and the CONCERT experience not being appreciated as they once were.

On the other side of the equation and particularly in Canada, we're also seeing a rise in tribute and cover bands being booked on bills that used to previously be exclusive to original acts. Why? The babyboomers have a larger disposal income than the Gen X-ers or millennials and they (namely being in charge of booking these events) want to hear THEIR music.

As a result of all of this, the LIVE music market for NEW ORIGINAL acts, in particular, is greatly being UNDERSERVED right now. Do I believe "rock is dead" as many have remarked? HECK no. BUT I do think the industry needs to seriously rethink its strategies, especially if it wants to keep other festivals which have been a huge part of our legacy from folding.

WC: What does the remainder of 2018 look like for you in terms of touring? What other dates are you looking forward to?

RCP: I think it goes without saying that performing at Warped will undoubtedly be the highlight of our summer, but we've also been extremely privileged to have had a heck of a kick off to our "Canadian Invasion" tour by performing at International Pop Overthrow (Chicago), East Coast Music Conference (Norfolk, Virginia) and Jersey Shore Festival (Seaside Heights, New Jersey).

We'll be making tour stops yet in Winston-Salem for Twin City Ribfest, Dayton for Yellow Springs Street Fair and Kenosha for Taste of Wisconsin. PLUS we have select Canadian appearances too including a return to Timmins (which we're super stoked about! Those folks know how to rock) for the Great Canadian Kayak Festival!

WC: We've found that many artists usually take one of two approaches when writing. Either they surround themselves with their influences or they completely shut out any outside music. Do you subscribe to either of these philosophies when writing? Are there any personal habits or "quirks" you bring with you into the process?

RCP: Honestly, my songwriting is not something that is "controlled", "forced" or deliberately "inspired" in any regard. Sometimes I go months on end without writing a damn thing and other times my mind is ripe with ideas. A lot of it depends on my mood and what's going on with my life at the time.

When I get inspired however, it's as simple as a melody popping into my head and me taking steps to flesh out whether a song is there.

Equally what I'm listening to depends on how I'm feeling. I like to try and stay upbeat before performances so I typically listen to a lot of "oh-my-god-this-is-so-perfectly-catchy" pop music like MJ, Madonna or Jamiroquai. When I'm in a contemplative or more subdued mood, I love my 90s and alternative rock like Big Wreck, Pearl Jam, Silverchair, Veruca Salt or Hole. When I wanna get seriously pumped up, there's nothing quite like Bon Jovi's "Slippery When Wet". When I want to simply sit back and take in musical perfection, I listen to the flawless voice of celtic Singer/Songwriter Loreena McKennitt or big band classics featuring Mr. Sinatra on vocals.

I have a very diverse music collection and draw inspiration from a little bit of everything. If my music comes out sounding more influenced by one genre or artist over another, it's likely a reflection of how I'm feeling when I'm writing, rather than what I'm necessarily listening to (or not listening to).

WC: Hypothetical situation. You've got 24 hours booked at either Abbey Road or Electric Lady Studios. Which do you choose? Why?

RCP: Without question, Abbey Road. The Beatles mastered writing simple yet universally-beloved songs that have remained popular for decades. That's talent at its finest and something that any songwriter can only dream of.

To be in the presence of where they made their magic would be nothing short of an honour, especially because they made their records with perfect harmonies and timing without relying on the trappings of modern technology. Again, talent at its finest.

WC: Hypothetical situation #2. You can bring any living musician, writer, vocalist, engineer and/or producer(s) with you into the studio for those 24 hours. Who makes the cut? What would your approach to the session entail?

RCP:

Producer: Bob Rock. His work on Metallica's "Black Album" and Veruca Salt's "Eight Arms to Hold You" is how ALL rock records should sound. In a word, "anthemic".

Musicians:

Michael Jackson: I would like to personally witness his creative genius unfold in a studio

Ian Thornley: I would be honoured to lend vocals to one of his emotional masterpieces or perform a duet with him if granted the privilege

Richie Sambora: He can play guitar on any of my songs...any time...without restraint.

Loreena McKennitt: I would love to take in a master class from her and learn about how she's perfected her technique

If I were face-to-face with any of these people in person, my priority would be to listen and take

in any advice or insight they have to offer. Ergo likely little would get done in the way of recording a song but damn I'd be inspired as hell and it'd certainly make for a hell of a story.

WC: Lastly, and we assure you this is the most important question you'll be asked all day... What shoes do you wear when touring and why? (We assure you, it's okay if you don't say Vans.)

RCP: I actually have two "weapons of choice" when it comes to touring footwear:

My combat boots which I've owned for at least 10 years. They're old, falling apart and lovingly referred to as my "bitch boots". I frequently joke about how hardcore they make me.

My fire engine-red Sketcher runners. They make me look about 12 years old, but damn that memory foam is comfortable.

WC: Thank you again for joining us, Rose! Are there any words of wisdom you'd care to leave us with?

RCP: If there's something in your heart that you've always wanted to pursue, do it. The worst that will happen is you fail. BUT if you never try you'll always wonder "what could have been? what if?"

To learn more about Rose Cora Perry & The Truth Untold, connect with them on social media:

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