

# DAYNA KURTZ bio

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"One of the things that I seem to encounter constantly is that I don't really quite fit anywhere," observes Dayna Kurtz. "But I like that, because I can define myself without the weight of other people's expectations. I'm not of the jazz, blues, folk, R&B, rock or pop worlds enough to belong to any one of them, but all of those things are in there."

Indeed, the much buzzed-about singer/songwriter/guitarist's remarkable new album *Beautiful Yesterday* may well be too musically eclectic and emotionally complex to slot into any simplistic music-biz marketing niche. But therein lies much of the dozen-song collection's appeal, with Kurtz channeling a deep affinity for these different genres into an unmistakably personal vision.

The lack of a ready stylistic tag hasn't stopped the resourceful New Jersey native from building a substantial audience—and a compelling body of recorded work—on her own terms. She maintains an enthusiastic international fan base that's embraced the poetic passion of her songwriting and the communicative power of her voice, an unforgettable, distinctly husky instrument that's capable of immense depth and sensitivity. She has also inspired reams of rapturous acclaim from critics and won admiration from her musical peers.

Kismet Records has issued a trio of full-length Kurtz CDs: the intimate live-performance souvenir *Otherwise Luscious Life*, the impressively accomplished studio effort *Postcards from Downtown*, and the new *Beautiful Yesterday*. Where her first two releases showcased Kurtz's own songwriting skills, *Beautiful Yesterday* emphasizes her equally riveting interpretive abilities. In addition to three originals—"Music Box," "Love, Where Did You Go" and the haunting title number—she applies her voice to a diverse assortment of material drawn from Billie Holiday, Prince, Leonard Cohen, Sam Cooke, Eszter Balint and others. *Beautiful Yesterday* also features guest appearances from Kurtz admirers Norah Jones, who volunteered to duet with Dayna on a warm, subdued take on Duke Ellington's "I Got It Bad," and the genre-busting classical quartet Ethel, who compliment Kurtz's reading of "Parlez-Moi D'Amour," a tune from the soundtrack to the 1991 film 'Henry and June,' and according to Kurtz "one of the loveliest melodies ever written."

Dayna Kurtz began performing her original compositions in public as a teenager, and subsequently spent the better part of a decade touring solo across the back roads of America, selling CDs out of her trunk and mesmerizing club and festival crowds with her riveting live performances. Along the way, she opened shows for the likes of Richie Havens (who became a fan and lent guest vocals to *Postcards from Downtown*), Richard Thompson, B.B. King, Dr. John, Olu Dara, Chris Whitley, Richard Buckner, Kelly Joe Phelps, Ladysmith Black Mambazo and the Blind Boys of Alabama, and won a 1997 nod as Female Songwriter of the Year by the National Academy of Songwriters.

The fan response and critical attention generated by Kurtz's grass-roots touring efforts inevitably drew interest from the mainstream music industry. Despite its low-key indie release, *Postcards From Downtown* quickly found an enthusiastic audience, winning Kurtz high-profile guest spots on such radio shows as *World Cafe*, *Mountain Stage* and NPR's *Morning Edition*. The album also put her on the map in Europe and was particularly well-received in Holland, where it received substantial airplay and became a Top 20 seller, culminating in sold-out headlining shows at Amsterdam's fabled Paradiso (one of which recorded for posterity as Kurtz's first DVD, *Postcards from Amsterdam*).

But Dayna Kurtz has worked too hard to allow such adulation to go to her head. "Every step I've taken has felt really organic, and like they've been made at the right time," she states, adding, "The records I've made feel like honest expressions of where I'm at musically, and the making of them has been joyful and interesting."

For more information on Dayna Kurtz please contact Matt Hanks at Shore Fire Media: [mhanks@shorefire.com](mailto:mhanks@shorefire.com) / 718.522.7171