





Debra Fotheringham

INTERVIEWED BY DAVID LAYTON

WEB: DEBRAFOTHERINGHAM.COM

How did you first get started in music?

Well, I've always wanted to be a musician, so I started playing violin at a very young age—when I was seven or something like that. I played for a while, then got sick of it. In junior high I picked up the trumpet and got sick of that as well. Then I picked up percussion, which I loved and still love, and around the same time I started to teach myself guitar. I've always been a writer, and so the thought of being able to do both of the things I love—music and writing—was really cool. So I started writing songs, and it was just awesome.

When you're writing a new song, what is your creative process?

I never write one thing first—like the lyrics first or the music first. I always start with some guitar riff or something, and I usually keep a book of ideas with me where I'll jot things down if I'm thinking about some kind of idea or lyric. And if the guitar riff fits that idea, then I try to meld them together.

Who have been your mentors?

There are so many musical influences— a lot of the songwriters, like Paul Simon and Joni Mitchell. Also, I grew up listening to a lot of jazz music.

My good friend Stephanie Smith has really helped me in my songwriting. She's an amazing songwriter, and I've learned a lot through my



friendship with her. There's also a guy out in Nashville named Rick Clark who I got to know. He's a producer who has done Death Cab for Cutie and stuff like that. He helped me refine my song-writing a lot. He's awesome.

How has your love of reading influenced your music?

A lot, I think. I love reading. In fact, I just finished three huge novels and my husband was freaking out, saying, "You finished that already?" It was good!

I'm not sure. I don't know how it would tie in directly with the music. I love to read, and I guess that has influenced my love of lyrics and my love of language.

How did your self-titled album get started?

That was years in the making. When I first started playing, I was about eighteen, and I just made this little demo in a friend's basement. I had been selling that for about five years, and I just didn't have the money or the means to make a real album. Eventually I just started saving; I guess I'd expected some benefactor to come out of the blue and fund my album, but finally I just realized that if I wanted this to happen, I had to make it happen.

So, I just funded it myself and met a guy named Giles Reeves. He's from Nashville originally, but he moved out here to help his nephew Jonathan Schultz at a studio out in Sandy. I met Giles, when he came to some little songwriters' get-together, and he was really interested and said he'd produce the album. So we got together and cranked it out in a couple of months. It was really, really awesome. Funnest two months of my life!

Which song on the album was the most fulfilling to write?

Probably "Summer Rain." "Summer Rain" represents those times in the summer when it's really hot and dry and sometimes you just want a little summer rain. It's kind of a metaphor for those times when you're just going through a period when nothing's happening and you're feeling frustrated and you want a little something to spice up life. That's kind of how I was feeling, and so I wrote about it.

What inspired the Portuguese in "You Are Truth"?

I wrote that for a friend's wedding where her husband went to Brazil on his mission. It's a bossa nova, so I wanted to throw a little bit of Portuguese in. It called for it.

You began performing at sixteen. How has your music evolved since then?

Hopefully it's not teenage music any more. I'd like to throw away my first songs and never hear them again. I'd like to think my lyrics have matured and I've learned how to craft a song a little bit better. I still have a long way to go, but I'd like to think that I've come a little bit further than when I was sixteen!

You've performed all over Europe and the United States. What was your most memorable performance?

My most memorable performance was probably my CD release concert, just because I was here in Provo, and there were all these people who had been supporting me through the years. They all came out to see me and the release of the CD that I had been waiting for for years. And everything just went right—the band played well and we were together. It was just one of those magical nights. It was awesome.

How does the gospel influence your work as an artist?

How does it not influence my work as an artist? I mean, the gospel is everything about who I am. I try not to make my music completely Mormon music—I don't want to isolate people who might be able to get something out of it—but I'd like to think it's influenced every bit of me. I don't think there's a piece that I can pull out and say, oh, this is how the gospel has influenced me, because the way I live, everything I do from a day-to-day basis, is influenced by the gospel.

Where do you see your career going as a singer/songwriter?

I don't know. I just want to keep playing and writing songs. That's my only goal. ■