

ABOUT MUSIC

(this interview was conducted on Valentine's Day, 2009)

Journo: *Dr. Love, I've heard people say you are the King of Karaoke, is that true?*

D.L.: I don't know about that. I can only recall one night in 2008 at the Hotel Beverly Hills a music friend introduced me to his mate and said: "this is Dr. Love, the King of Karaoke Kings."

Journo: *that must have gone straight to your head*

D.L.: you bet.

Journo: *your musso friend mustn't have been sober at the time?*

D.L.: nor are many at rock concerts.

Journo: *we've heard you are getting a Rock 'N' Roll band together, is that true?*

D.L.: if seeing is believing.

Journo: *what do you mean?*

D.L.: it must have been all the talk about the Versace shirt with a custom print that read "The Dr. Love Band will rock you!" ([View Photo Gallery](#))

Journo: *did any musician fall for that?*

D.L.: no

Journo: *did any lady would for that?*

D.L.: no

Journo: *did anyone fall for that?*

D.L.: one.

Journo: *only one?*

D.L.: well, at least one bloke had faith in the Dr. Love Band concept. That was one night in August (2008) when that shirt made its debut at the Comedy Club. I recall a patron nearby chatting to his mate and said "I believe he can do it".

Journo: *why are you doing it?*

D.L.: through music I've found love and discovered life. Now I want to get a band together to create music and hopefully tour around to share that experience and to preach love and harmony between people of all cultures and beliefs.

Journo: *what do you think is the key to success?*

D.L.: The key to success is to have talents in the band but more importantly to have a plan to get there. The second point is really what differentiates bands that end up playing gigs in pubs and bands that make it to the big time.

Journo: *talking about talent, have you been in any singing competition?*

D.L.: no.

Journo: *have you sung at jam nights?*

D.L.: no.

Journo: *have you auditioned for the American Idol?*

D.L.: no.

Journo: *have you played in a band?*

D.L.: no.

Journo: *have you ever thought of becoming a rock star?*

D.L.: yes, every night before I retire to bed.

Journo: *well Dr. Love, what's your definition of a grandiose delusion?*

D.L.: a grandiose delusion is when you think you are going to be a rock star but have no talent whatsoever and no plans to get there.

Journo: *may be we should call your dream a grandiose delusion with a touch of reality.*

D.L.: why aren't you been positive?

Journo: *well, just take a look at you.*

D.L.: don't you like my Versace gear.

Journo: *aren't rock stars meant to be tall, dark and handsome?*

D.L.: Yeah I know, only if I'm half foot taller. Dr. Love admits he isn't Bon Jovi or Robbie Williams. But then again it depends on who is making the judgement and where our band will be playing. You see this all American band could be more popular overseas than at home. Some place somewhere, 1.4 billion people may just like Dr. Love for who he is.

Journo: *can you actually sing?*

D.L.: One thing I know is that at every pub Dr. Love has been, he manages to set the stage on fire after just one song. The crowd erupts when Bon Jovi hits like Its My Life, and Living on a Prayer are rolled out. Dr. Love knows he can transform this small scale performance into stadium concerts.

Journo: *what have people said about your singing?*

D.L.: I remember the second night at the Hotel Beverly Hills, a Saturday night some time in March 2007, a bloke I met in the toilet block said to me: "you're already half a hero". Later, I thought to myself: "you can't be half a hero at the Chamber, you got to be a complete hero."

Another night after singing Everybody Hurt by REM, a guy said: "never to be repeated." I also remember a bloke one night yelled out: "Sony music contract" after I walked off the stage.

Journo: *are you gifted with a voice?*

D.L.: well it's a cliché that singers are born. The truth is singers are made through sheer hard work, blessed with an anatomy that gives them a unique tone and voice.

Journo: *when did your music journey start?*

D.L.: it started some time in early 2005 at Oceanside Pub, south of L.A., where I worked as the doctor next door, caring for the locals. I never thought of becoming a musician back then. It was a matter of doing some karaoke to see if anybody liked it and perhaps a chance to find love.

Journo: *what was the first song you ever sang?*

D.L.: any guesses.

Journo: *surely it would have to be Desperado by the Eagles.*

D.L.: I hope you haven't looked up the answers to the quiz. Would you like to lock it in?

Journo: *lock it in.*

D.L.: well, it's a great song that typified the mental struggle a man has to go through to find his true love.

Journo: *what happened next?*

D.L.: I started doing other songs from Eagles as I'd been to their concerts twice in 2004. That's how much I love their music. Soon after starting karaoke, I also became interested in U2, another super band, followed by Bon Jovi.

Journo: *how did you go with Bon Jovi?*

D.L.: poorly. That was then.

Journo: *what about now?*

D.L.: now a few years on, I can get through the 5th and 6th chorus of Living on a Prayer with no worry.

Journo: *how do you sing songs?*

D.L.: originally by listening to the CD and practising, a lot of practising.

Journo: *how do you know if you are hitting the right notes?*

D.L.: that was then. Nowadays I have a collection of song books as a reference.

Journo: *as a reference?*

D.L.: well, by the time we hit the stage, I would have known every song for the night, note by note including sharps, flats, slurs, legatos, staccatos with no fail.

Journo: *still how do you know you have hit the right notes?*

D.L.: I play a bit of piano. I can pitch the vocal notes against the piano notes.

Journo: *did you go to singing lessons?*

D.L.: well, a professional singer friend gave me some advice. Without her help I wouldn't have known how to hit the high notes.

Journo: *what advice did she give you?*

D.L.: she told me to position the tongue and vocal cord to say the letter "E" when singing high notes. It was a simple advice, yet so valuable.

Journo: *how do you think your voice has improved?*

D.L.: I think with a lot of practice and singing, particularly doing high pitched Bon Jovi songs, the vocal cords and muscles of the larynx strengthen. They become tuned and programmed to singing.

Journo: *can you give us some tips on how to sing well?*

D.L.: singing is a lot more than hitting the right notes at the right time. It's about creating sound volume using air flow, creating space at back the mouth, utilising the resonators and then adding an element of vibrato to the sound waves. Next is to develop your own unique tone which is what separates one singer from another.

Another element to good singing is to add feelings and expressions to the song. It's about understanding the true meaning of songs as expressed by the artists and the story behind how the

songs were written. I choose songs that relate to my life experience and reflect my mood and the feeling I am under on the night.

Journo: *what about acting?*

D.L.: that's the final element to good singing. You are a performer on stage. It's all about charisma, personality and visual presentation. Dr. Love certainly has done his fair share of acting on the karaoke stage particularly in his early days at the Hotel Beverly Hills.

Nowadays, Dr. Love has refrained from acting on the karaoke stage because he feels it's not the appropriate forum for acting. When stadium concerts come along, it would be a different story, quite a different story.

Journo: *will the band you'll get together write original songs?*

D.L.: For the Western world, we will be writing and playing our own songs. When we tour Asian countries, we will be performing classic western hits as well our own.

Music is like painting, a type of artistry. Every band produces a different style of music. Original songs are what define a band. The quality of music and lyrics produced will determine its success. Producing songs that will turn into hits requires talents. Getting that talented team together is not an easy task.

Journo: *why the difference between the West and the East?*

D.L.: Asia is a huge market for Western pop rock music. Although super bands tour Asia, they only perform at a few major Asian cities. Most Asian cities do not get the chance to see Western pop rock performed live at stadium level. It's a market segment we want to tap into.

Journo: *why do you think the Dr. Love Band will be a success?*

D.L.: to be successful in anything, you've got be different, you've got to stand out from the crowd. In marketing it's called product differentiation. Selling a music band is no different from selling a product.

I hope when the band does its first gig in a local pub, when we walk out, they'll notice something unique about us. That's not easy for an all American band hitting an American pub.

To us it's not just about standing on stage play and sing. It's about the atmosphere, the stage setting, the story telling, the personalities, the acting and the supporting casts.

Journo: *what else is different about the Dr. Love band?*

D.L.: well the band is about a professional turned Rock N Roll performer. Instead of using pens and blades, he is turning to music to heal people's heart and soul. In the history of Rock N Roll this has never happened. We are selling a concept, a kind of brand here.

I think Dr. Love's merchandise and fashion would complement the whole "Dr. Love Inc." idea. Dr. Love brand would one day stand on its own much like Versace and Nike. Neither household name existed 40 odd years ago.

Another difference is our band will be playing songs in two of the largest languages in the world, English and Mandarin, covering 2 billion potential audiences. There are no bands doing what we want do.

Journo: *is your head swollen?*

D.L.: ever more with every question you pose and the Tequila is not helping. I tell you one more thing; the Dr. Love band will be an all blonde angels band with me as the lead singer. Sex appeal sells tickets and that's a fact.

Journo: *despite all the big talk, it seems you have blown quite a few birthday candles. Don't you think those Japanese Sony executives would want to shut the door against your face when they take one look at you?*

D.L.: not if I am walking through the door with Selena holding my hand followed by blonde angel musicians. They'll be saying to themselves: "we can sell Dr. Love Inc, it's going to bring in billions." They know every bloody Chinaman in the Middle Kingdom will come to our concerts.

Journo: *quietly frankly, I don't think they will let you and the angels leave the room. I think you can demand any price you like for the record deal.*

D.L.: well, at the end of the day, music is about entertainment and entertainment is all about image and perceptions. It's about how "Dr. Love Inc." and the Dr. Love Band are promoted to the public and what audience we will be targeting.

Journo: *what sort of audience will the Dr Love's Band be targeting apart from the obvious?*

D.L.: well, you'll be surprised I think a lot of guys will come along. A lot of our songs will be in the style of Bon Jovi and Guns N Roses, the hard rock stuff. It's not all going be love songs.

We also want to bring out the mums and dads to our gigs. Most of them have their hearts held in fast suburban chains. Rock concerts just don't have same feel and ring to them anymore. That's

the challenge for the Dr. Love Band. We want to fire up their dreams and bring back funkiness to mid-age.

Young people will come too. They will be attracted by our original music, hard rock hits and on stage performance. They'll saying to themselves if this guy can make it we all can. They all want know how Dr. Love did it.

In Asian countries, I think people of all ages will come to our concert because they would like to see a sort of ex-patriot returning from the West triumphant as a doctor turned pop star. It's a kind of dream story for them.

Journo: *what do you think of today's music industry?*

D.L.: it's vastly different to what came before.

In the 70's the only form of entertainment was LP records and sucking on chilli dogs at the drive-in. There were no gaming parlours except for a few Space-Invader game stations outside corner stores. The tubes were mostly in black and white and the standard box came in only 9". PS3, DVD and MP3 were jargon spoken by aliens in UFO's.

The 70's were also the decade when all the big name bands were rocking at the same time with the likes of Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin and Eagles. The former members of the Beatles were doing their solo numbers. The King still had his blue suede shoes on and was walking in Memphis well into 1977. U2 was formed in 1976 and Bon Jovi was dreaming what all other teenager boys were dreaming then.

Record sales were breaking records year after year. Back then, it was not a case of checking out what cars the Jones were driving, but on who had the bigger LP collections and more expensive record players. "Is your pin head gold plated?" was the catch phrase.

Journo: *what about the 80's?*

D.L.: the 80's saw the revolution in the name of CD and more superstars came with the likes of Bon Jovi, Michael Jackson and U2 coming of age with the Joshua Tree release in 1988, and MTV beamed to record TV audience. Music was in fashion and there was not much competition for the dollar. But there were signs of things to come.

The computing gaming industry was looming to become a dominant force in entertainment for the new generation. So was the booming movie, video and television industry. The internet was in its infancy and DVD was coming.

Journo: *what about the 90's?*

D.L.: as the 90's came, the music landscape transformed quite dramatically. Gone are the days of the super bands, at least not new ones. U2 and Bon Jovi were still peaking. Eagles made a comeback in 1994 after a 14 year sabbatical. The 90's and new millennium saw many bands come and go. If your records aren't selling, your contract will not be renewed. The industry was churning out a lot of fast music for fast money.

The entertainment industry underwent metamorphosis. Competition for audience and their money came from all directions: X-Box, surfing wireless on the beach, cable TV, Oprah show and DVD rentals for 1 dollar. Even bungee jumping became a form of entertainment. Nowadays, we see perfectly sane people paying big money to jump from aeroplanes on their birthdays.

One thing for sure people just ain't opening their wallet for music as much as they did in the 70's and 80's. Then the last nail came for the coffin for CD's and Walkman: worldwide web and Youtube. No more need be said.

Journo: *is there anything positive about the future of the music industry?*

D.L.: there are plenty of positives about music. Music is big business and will always remain a big business. It's just the challenges and opportunities are different and new marketing strategies need to be developed.

One of the positive things about the age of electronic music is that it's a lot more available and accessible. The market in terms of audience number is growing rapidly whether they are in America, Asia or Africa. With pay for demand service (MP3, iPhone, cable TV, streaming downloads), the royalties would help to reward the musicians.

However, for Rock N Roll bands of today and tomorrow, the key to success is playing live music. It's probably the only way to make a good living. Whether it's pub gigs, concert hall music or stadium rock, it can not be reproduced or downloaded. Expensive printed T-shirts, Dagwood dogs and beer in plastic cups are just part of the deal.

Journo: *beer in plastic cups?*

D.L.: well it's an event, it's a day out with mates and if you don't like the band, there is always the grog. But isn't it annoying when your favourite drop, Bud, is not being served because the concert is sponsored by Heineken and they didn't tell you before you left Winslow, Arizona?

Journo: *so will the band be touring Winslow?*

D.L.: not quite, may be Phoenix, Arizona.

Journo: *where else will be the band be touring?*

D.L.: apart from Phoenix, hopefully all of North America and Asia.

Journo: *tell us more about Asia.*

D.L.: Asia is emerging as the biggest and fastest growing market for pop music and offers the best opportunity for stadium rock concerts.

Not only is Asia the fastest growing economy in the world, it's the most populous with nearly 200 cities that have 1 million people or more each. Western pop rock is very popular and fashionable among Asian youths. The likes of Bon Jovi, U2 and Eagles tours Asia regularly. Music is big business there and it's about to get much bigger.

Journo: *why do you think your band will find success there?*

D.L.: well I hope when this all American band steps onto the Olympic Bird Nest Stadium, Beijing, for a concert in 2012, the audience would recognise something unique about this band. I hope we can say: "g'day" in Mandarin.

You see just the Middle Kingdom alone has a population of 1400 million with close to 100 cities having a population of 1 million or more each. I figure if we tour one of these cities a week, it would take us two years to tour the whole Kingdom, not to mention the rest of Asia.

Journo: *would the people there understand what you are singing?*

D.L.: that depends on what language we sing.

Journo: *Dr. Love, we know you are good at a few things, but surely you couldn't be good at everything?*

D.L.: put it this way, everything will be alright on the night. Just imagine the reaction when we play Western rock all night long at the Bird Nest, then throw in a few local hits in Mandarin to a packed Pekinese crowd.

Journo: *what about releasing an album in Mandarin?*

D.L.: I wouldn't say no to that. In fact, we could be the first Western rock band releasing an original album in the biggest foreign language, spoken by 1.6 billion people worldwide.

Journo: *so now we know you can rock the audience with two languages, but will Dr. Love play any instrument on stage?*

D.L.: Several months ago I restarted playing the piano, after learning it a few years back. Recently, I brought my Roland digital piano to a jam night at the Comedy Club (November 2008) and played the instrumental version of Desperado. I've got 3 years to get it perfect. Hopefully, when we play at the Bird Nest Stadium at Christmas 2012, I will play and sing three songs on the piano: Desperado, Candle in the Wind and Piano Man. I think it would be a crowd winner.

Journo: *so how many members are there in the band?*

D.L.: at the moment, just myself. Forming a band is like a marriage, you've got find the right partners. I may take months or even years to get it right.

I've met a lot of musicians playing the pub scene. They are all great in one way or another. They must think this Dr. Love Band concept is at best a joke, a kind of hoax to talk up his star potential so he could get lucky or at worst a delusional thought. They'll be saying: "for a start, this guy couldn't even play any instrument and secondly, could this guy actually speak English, does anybody know?"

Journo: *so is it a hoax?*

D.L.: well if I don't get this band thing up and running soon that would be what people would say?

Journo: *so what's stopping you?*

D.L.: well, Dr. Love already has two jobs, as a professional and running a business. Between the two and stalking the Karaoke Bar at the Chamber, Dr. Love simply doesn't have the time to start his fourth career, at least for the moment.

Journo: *how can we give you a push?*

D.L.: if some musicians are genuinely interested in the music concept I have presented in this interview and come along and say: "would you like to try for a jam night with us", I'll say: "for sure."

Journo: *you just said you haven't got time?*

D.L.: well, if I could get into a band and start doing paid gigs, then I shall say goodbye to the karaoke scene. It's a rolling ball effect. But the ball has to be rolled first. Dr. Love just needs someone to give him a little nudge.

Journo: *rather than waiting to be nudged, have you started talking to any musicians?*

D.L.: around pubs yes. It's been known since June 2008 at HBH that Dr. Love wanted to start a band.

Journo: *how did it go?*

D.L.: I don't think any musicians around pub scenes in L.A. have taken Dr. Love seriously yet. Just like barmaids, the musicians don't know what to do with Dr. Love. They are all sitting on the fence and not making a move.

Journo: *why is that?*

D.L.: well, musicians around pub scenes are generally conservative lot. They aren't getting a lot of loot for what they do. Pub bands often do without a drummer or a bass player, trying to squeeze extra dollars for their play.

They'll be thinking to themselves: "if we get Dr. Love in the band, it's only going to reduce our cut for the night." After all, they are already doing the singing themselves. What's the point? He doesn't even know play the six-string.

Journo: *point understood. How many band members do you need?*

D.L.: Five. I like to see three guitarists and a drummer.

Journo: *so what sort of musician would you be looking for?*

D.L.: I will be looking for professional female musicians, preferably with a degree in music and the ability to write songs. One thing we don't see enough these days are female guitarists and drummers touring around with leading bands. As stated, I would like to have an all blonde angels band.

Journo: *has any record company showing interest?*

D.L.: I don't think any of them has heard of Dr. Love. If we could get a band of talented musician together, making noises around town and releasing some original pieces, we'll be on our way. I think if any record company executive makes their way to our pub gigs, they'll sign us up on the night.

Journo: *Dr. Love, you've done well with your talk, but what is your honest opinion about the chance of your band making it to the top?*

D.L.: my honest answer is the odds are going to be next to none. We probably end up doing pub gigs like everyone else.

Journo: *time for a drink.*

D.L.: waiter.

Waiter: *what would you like, gentlemen?*

D.L.: a jug of Vodka and Whiskey on ice.

Waiter: *sorry, we are out of Vodka and Whiskey, the Bon Jovi crew emptied the bar last night. There are just a few roses left on the shelves.*

D.L.: looks like they've taken that blonde barkeeper with them.

Waiter: *she's done well with a wig.*

D.L.: I said we should have come to Beverly Wilshire last night. I could have got my photos taken with that barkeeper and autographed by Jon & Richie. You know I've never been in the arms of a blonde before.

Speaker: paging Journo No. 288, the crew has arrived in the interview room.

Journo: *that's my number.*

D.L.: can I come along.

Journo: *quite frankly, I'm tired of listening to blokes with elevated egos week in week out. Why don't you go and do my job for a change. I'll just put my feet up, enjoy a few Wild Turkeys and watch the sunset on Rodeo Drive.*

D.L.: me, did you say. Mmmh, let me think: "Dr. Love interviews Bon Jovi", does that sound right?

Journo: *let me close my eyes. Dr. Love going once, going twice... Where's he gone?*

Waiter: did you see the bloke who was chatting to you, he jolted away in no time.

Journo: *I am glad I got rid of him. I hope Bon Jovi can put up with the runaway Doc.*

(In the distance, fading): Crooning "It's My Life" by Bon Jovi

(End)