

Lizzy Grant, 2008

WITH BREA TREMBLAY

I'm waiting at Alice's Tea Cup, a café on the Upper East Side, when Lizzy Grant saunters up. She's wearing skintight black pants, a vintage floral blouse and a red letterman's jacket. Her bright blonde hair is piled on top of her head and her eyes are rimmed with sooty eyeliner. If we were in a movie, her entrance would be scored with a vamp, the bass line revving to announce the arrival of an enchanting young ingénue.

But since we're not in a film, she's scored her own entrance with her CD *Kill Kill*. Produced by David Kahne (Regina Spektor, Sublime, Paul McCartney), the music is lush and cinematic, with strings, Wuriltzers, and electric guitars, recalling 50s-era Americana both sonically and thematically. The mix is anchored by Lizzy's voice, which twists between a smoky gravel and a breathy Marilyn coo as she wails about the timeless ache of love in a modern world.

Her EP, also titled *Kill Kill*, is out October 21 with a full length LP due in February '09. Over coffee, we discussed her music, her trailer home, and Tiger Beat.

Brea: You describe your music as Hawaiian glam metal and surf noir. How did you come to those descriptions?

Lizzy: At first I didn't know why I liked the "Hawaiian and glam," idea but as I started listening to more artists I like, it made sense. There was just something about the look of Hawaii and then I started thinking more about Elvis and I couldn't believe how many Hawaiian references there were in his work. And the glam came from an old boyfriend, who was very handsome. He said that his music was glam, so I copied him. And then I started to look at other glam-y artists and movies-- you know, like "Velvet Goldmine," and I thought, this is what I've always wanted to do. I'm very into a drag queen world-- anything showy and gold.

Brea: And what about metal?

Lizzy: The same boyfriend taught me all about Van Halen and Poison, and he called them metal bands. As soon as I heard them, I thought, "these are my people!" And then it was all that I listened to, so... When I met with all the big record labels, they didn't like the term "metal" at all, because admittedly the music doesn't sound like metal. But, it is influenced by men who like metal.

Brea: And surf noir is the similar to the Elvis references?

Lizzy: Surf noir is one of those two word phrases that came together for me. I was listening to a lot of Beach Boys and watching a lot of movies and I just felt like what I wanted to be was something "surf noir." But then I started searching for the words together, and there is a movement called surf noir, but it's a style of cinema... I couldn't buy Surfnoir.com.

Brea: So the EP has three songs-- any plans to release a full CD?

Lizzy: Yes, when I recorded with Davey [David Kahne], we recorded 13 songs. So I was never expecting to release an EP, but when iTunes came to us, and became fervent supporters and said, "put out anything and we'll give you the artist's spotlight." We decided, okay, we'll just put out an EP, which was released on October 21.

Brea: The instrumentation is very theatrical and I was wondering what sort of process you used in writing those parts. Was it collaborative?

Lizzy: Before we started, we spent three weeks with really thorough emails back and forth-- I really liked the sound I had and I wanted to make sure to keep it. I told Davey that I wanted to sound like black and white, and I wanted it to sound famous and like Coney Island and like a sad party. And he wrote back, "I can do that! I understand that perfectly."

Brea: How do you feel about how it came out?

Lizzy: I am pleased. The funny thing is, if it was exactly the way I wanted, then I would say that I am completely pleased, but because it's different than I expected, I'll be pleased if many other people like it too. I feel like a shithead saying that...but I hope it gets some kind of recognition just so that I can move on and do some different things.

Brea: What type of things would you move on to?

Lizzy: I always expect that once I do something, I'm going to be able to transition into this better life, like maybe move somewhere else or get to know more people. Ideally, I would like to move back to a little part of New Jersey or Coney Island and have people to work with on little projects like music videos, because I do much better in a box. Performing is really, really hard for me, so I would just like to have more people and more money to do more sexy projects.

Brea: Sexy projects!

Lizzy: Yes, I just want to have something to do all the time-- and it's easier to do when people think you're great.

Brea: Where do you see a record like this being played?

Lizzy: That's a good question. I was sure that I knew, but I've been wrong. For instance, I've been singing recently at private parties for young Wall Street, and not so young Wall Street, and I'm surprised that they like the music. I guess that's not really a demographic though is it?

Brea: A recently unemployed demographic, but...

Lizzy: [Laughs] And I started singing at places in my hometown like the American Legion, and the friends I have here-- biker guy transplants from small towns. So maybe them too?

Brea: I thought it was really interesting that you use a lot of very feminine cultural signifiers with references to Daddy figures and pinup styles. At the same time, it feels modern because the narrator of the songs is very clearly the one in control. Do I understand it correctly?

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Lizzy: I think you do. I guess my songs started being songs that I liked when I stopped being nervous about the content. I do like singing about "Daddy" and "baby"-- "Daddy" being the man and me being the "girl." I didn't know that that had been such a prevalent theme in the Fifties, but now that I've listened to more music from that era, I see that it is. And I'm very relieved, because I don't want it to seem like I have a complex! But it's something I can't get over. I want to have a life where there's just one man in it, and I haven't found that.

Brea: But then in the song "Gramma Blue Ribbon Sparkler," it seems your grandma is telling you that there will be one guy, and you respond that you want to be "the whole world's girl."

Lizzy: That's funny. I mean, that was the last song we recorded and I already had the choruses, and I got to write the verses while I was living in a trailer in New Jersey. The best part of it was the light rail that ran from the Park to Hoboken. I wrote the verses on that, back and forth, because that's the best view of the city. I think that was one of my happiest times, and I think that makes for happiness in the verses. And I remember telling my grandma, "I wish I could meet someone." And she said, "When I was young, we didn't have the chance or the choice to try and see a lot of people-- you had to meet a man and that was kind of it-- but don't be afraid to meet everybody." And I thought, you're the first person in my family who's ever made me feel like it's okay to want to try and find the right thing.

Brea: Were you living in a trailer when you were making the record?

Lizzy: Yes. And I know how that sounds. But the fact is that I always thought it was a dream. It was the first place that was mine. And the people-- it's a real community. People decorate their homes.

Brea: Speaking of embellishment, it seems like style is very important to you and you have a very cohesive package in music and your look.

Lizzy: Well, wanting to have a defined life and a defined world to live in has been a lifelong ambition and desire for me, but it has changed a lot. Which is fine.

Brea: Now, it's very retro-inspired but modern, similar to the music.

Lizzy: A lot of the songs on this record came about because I didn't have a lot of exposure to all things cool, but now that I do, I just realize that I fit in perfectly. So I plan on just gratefully incorporating more of it.

Brea: Sounds very organic.

Lizzy: Yes, though now that I have been exposed to more, it's getting harder. I don't want it to feel like I'm copying anyone.

Brea: Did you ever read Tiger Beat magazine?

Lizzy: Tiger Beat? Like Jonathan Taylor Thomas?

Brea: Exactly! They always do quizzes about things people like, so I thought it would be fun to give you a little Tiger Beat style test!

Lizzy: Cool! That's a big deal.

Brea: Three things you always have with you.

Lizzy: Three things I always have with me... [rummages around in her bag and pulls out items.] A sparkle notebook. Lip liner. Cayenne pepper.

Brea: Cayenne pepper! Why?

Lizzy: When I get nervous, I put Cayenne pepper on my lips. It calms me down.

Brea: Best pickup line ever used.

Lizzy: It was something like, "If I said you had a beautiful body, would you hold it against me?" I didn't get it at first and I was like, well no, but that's very nice.

Brea: Most embarrassing song on my iPod or generic MP3 player.

Lizzy: I would say a self-help audio-book.

Brea: Favorite food

Lizzy: Coffee. And pie.

Brea: If you could kiss any celebrity, who would it be?

Lizzy: Oh that's good. Antony. From Antony and the Johnsons.

Brea: Describe yourself in three words.

Lizzy: Confused. Floral. And ah, odd?

Brea: I was expecting Hawaiian glam metal.

Lizzy: Oh, that too!



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