

Peach Kelli Pop: Teaching Yourself How to Play Guitar

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09.22.15

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Peach Kelli Pop hits a sweet chord with catchy rhythms, bubble-gum vocals, and whimsical lyrics—but don't let her cute image fool you; Allie Halon is a seasoned and thoughtful musician, who pulls inspiration from love, life and The Ramones.

Peach Kelli Pop III on Burger Records makes us want to sit in the sun, daydream, and never grow up. Halon is self-taught in multiple instruments and the energy of her live performance (often backed by an all-female band) is more contagious than mononucleosis. We sat down with Halon and talked about her transition from drummer to guitarist and being "Digital For Life" when it comes to recording.

The Shreds: How did growing up in Ottawa, Canada affect your music?

Allie Halon: When I was growing up and first started listening to music, there wasn't a lot of activity going on and there wasn't a lot of bands coming through so I used to have to drive to the bigger cities nearby; Montreal and Toronto. By the time I turned 18, a lot of people started new bands and everyone was really inspired, there was a lot of great stuff happening and it was really important for me to get into music and to get inspired to start playing in bands.

I'd say being deprived of seeing bands can be a really great thing. I kind of assumed I'd never get to see bands that I love play live and I think that really makes you romanticize music in a pretty special way. That's something that I also see when I'm touring—playing a smaller city people are so thankful and so excited.

What's the first song you remember writing?

The first song I wrote was an instrumental song for a girl band I was in around 2008. That was the first time I tried writing a song because I actually started off drumming, and as a drummer you don't typically write songs, you just kind of play on other people's songs. I couldn't really play the guitar but it was really fun so I started to write pretty simple little surf songs on guitar and bass.

How did you learn to play guitar? Did you pick up a guitar and just start fucking with it?

I asked one of my friends to show me how to play a barre chord, which as people who are reading this will probably know, is the classic punk rock way to play guitar and you can really play almost any kind of song with a barre chord. So I learned a few really simple songs just playing that kind of style, then tried to master different songs that I really liked. I definitely started off really slow.

When I first started writing my own songs I incorporated the barre chords and played little root note solos—you can do a lot with really simple guitar.

What is it that gave you the ability to say, "I'm going to teach myself guitar and do this?"

My mother definitely taught my sisters and I to not be scared, to try new things, and just to... follow your heart [*laughs*]. It was really nice to have her show me that it's ok to try stuff and not be scared of something not working out the first time.

What's your approach when someone isn't supportive?

The way some people talk to me, it's obvious that they don't really respect me as someone who plays music, it's more like you're a girl I saw on stage so I'm going to approach you and talk to you. It's different every time. Sometimes it's easy to just laugh off people who don't understand but when it's someone that you respect or a friend and they obviously don't get it, that can be pretty tough. I try and not let it bother me, and I try and focus on people who understand and take it seriously, which luckily, there are people out there.

What is your songwriting process?

It definitely varies. Sometimes I'll just be playing lead guitar and I'll come up with a progression or riff that I really like and depending on the mood or feel of it, I might write lyrics to that or I might write lyrics and then come up with something that makes sense for those words.



You don't have a traditional band. Can you tell us more about that process both while recording and playing live?

I write and record and play all of the music, so it's all me and my own personal style. I try to have people play almost exactly what's on the record, just 'cause that's what fans know and enjoy. Personally I don't really like when I see a band and they are playing my favorite song and it's really different.

How did you teach yourself to record?

I've always used a multi-tracking program on whatever computer and it's so simple. You can get different plug-ins to change the guitar sounds or the bass sounds and that's really cool because the plug-ins are free. Usually to have a reverb effect you would have to buy that \$120 pedal for that one part in that one song, so it's nice with digital recording you can make things sound exactly the way you want without spending any money, that's really great to me. Most of my friends are against that—they're all about recording to tape, recording with their 4-track but I grew up using computers, I'm really comfortable with them and it's an amazing way to get a lot of different sounds without spending money, so "Digital For Life." [*Laughs*]

Where does your drive to write music come from? What motivates your creativity?

Sometimes I feel guilty because I don't really have something that's like I need to release this thing, this crazy thing. I think for some people that write music it's a very inherent need and process that they have to do to be mentally healthy. I don't really have that. I enjoy it, I get a great sense of satisfaction when I write a song that I'm proud of and I also really enjoy when other people enjoy songs that I've written. Writing an album and releasing it on vinyl is really satisfying, and when other people enjoy it and identify with it, and it's special to them—that's what makes me want to write music.

You moved from Ottawa to L.A., why has that been important for you?

I think it's important to get out of your comfort zone. I think it's important to establish yourself with a clean slate. It can be really empowering to go somewhere new, and try new things and see new sites and establish yourself in a new city. It can be challenging but really great also. I think it's a very healthy thing for people to, "Just try it," you can always go back home. [*Laughs*]

Issue No.11



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