

## ALANA LEVANDOSKI

### Alana's Bio



Alana was raised in the small village of Kelwood, Manitoba. "I was born in nearby McCreary but Kelwood--six miles from our house--is where I have always called home," she says. "This is where both my parents attended school and my mother's family have received their mail for fifty years. My father grew up on a farm ten miles south and attended school in the village of Riding Mountain. My parents met in grade eight." (When the Riding Mountain school closed, her father was transferred to the Kelwood school).

Alana's childhood came as rural Western Canada was undergoing a significant makeover, from a pastoral setting into corporate farm Canada. Kelwood, with a population of 300, was no longer a bustling farming community. The railway, along with the grain elevators, had been removed and the main highway had been rebuilt a mile to the west. So most businesses had closed. It had a general store (with a post office), one garage, one cafe, a school, a skating rink, a community centre, and Canadian Legion Hall.

After attending kindergarten in Kelwood, Alana was educated at home with her older sister Nadia, and younger brother Matthew.

"Our parents wanted to have more influence over our development," she recalls. "They felt strongly that we should be able to explore the natural strengths and interests we possessed without the pressures that exist in educational facilities. While my peers were cramming for a science test they'd likely forget the day afterwards, I was able to ride Arabian horses through the Riding Mountains, naming trees, birds, wildlife and plants.

"If I finished my academics in the morning, I got to put my attention toward my passions in the afternoon. My passions were literature, acting, and music. When I was 10, my parents built a stage in my room. It had curtains that could close just like in a real theatre. My friends and siblings and I would put on theatrical shows. We invited neighbours, and sometimes charged admission."

One of the remaining venues in Kelwood was the skating rink. From age three until she left home, skating was a central part of Alana's life. "We were one of the first clubs around to have a precision skating team," says Alana proudly.

Alana's first involvement with music began at 9 until 13 performing in the gospel-styled band Family & Friends in her parents living room each week. "My musical influence as a young child consisted mostly of gospel music," she recalls. "I picked up a guitar when I was 12. I also took piano lessons for many years."

By 14, Alana's musical tastes were diverse. She avidly listened to recordings by Simon & Garfunkel, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Patsy Cline, Dolly Parton, and Johnny Cash as well as the music of rockers Nirvana, Bruce Springsteen, Neil Young, the Rolling Stones, and U2. "I can still almost smell the incense I used to burn in my room as a teenager while listening to such incredible talent," she says. "Most of my heroes wrote songs in a very raw fashion."

At 15, Alana began entering and winning local talent contests, performing mostly her own songs. Her first fully realized song was "Sailing From Holland" about being a sailor. "It's a good song but I was still developing my sound," she says.

At 17, Alana played off-and-on with 600 Bones, a Brandon, Manitoba group that performed jazz, folk and worldbeat. By 2001, after living briefly in Turkey, she was residing in Winnipeg and performing with Jamoeba, a 6-piece 'jam' band.

In the interim since chopping off her dread-locked hair, Alana's reputation has been bolstered by performing alongside Lindy, the Wyrd Sisters, Randy Bachman, and the Arrogant Worms. She has also co-written with Canadian folk matriarch Sylvia Tyson as well as Simon Wilcox, George Canyon, and Colin Cripps.

She was also hailed as "The 'It' Girl of Canadian Roots Music" by CBC Radio host Bill Stunt. In his 2005 book "Made In Manitoba" Winnipeg music historian John Einarson wrote: "Alana Levandoski's name is dropped in the most exclusive music circles as the next major singer/songwriter to emerge from Manitoba."

"Recording, touring and learning how to deal with people in the industry-both record company executives and musicians I work with-has been quite a learning experience," she says. "Now, having people showing up to my shows excited to hear me..well, that's pretty humbling."