



MAMA KIN

Mama Kin is equal parts raconteur and soulstress: a sassy femme fatale who draws on her experiences of love, life and heartache. Her bittersweet melodies soar with stomping piano and swampy beats, traversing the riotous, the raw and the intimate.

Drawing inspiration from the songbird greats, Mama Kin's music is powerful and gut-wrenchingly honest. She opens her heart to reveal a strength and vulnerability that is at once arresting and inspiring.

Born into a family of Maltese extraction, where music reigns and talent abounds, Mama Kin is Danielle Caruana, the youngest of six siblings. Intimidated by the natural ability of her older brothers Michael and Nicky (Bomba), she was a diligent classical piano student, focussed on honing her technical skills, but pining for the musical and improvisational freedom of her brothers.

It was her sister Carmen who inspired Mama Kin to sing, paving the way for her rich vocal exploration. Through Carmen, she discovered Joan Armatrading, Bonnie Raitt and Aretha Franklin, and a fragility and resonance that now defines her hauntingly powerful croon.

From her father's record collection, Mama Kin found the country greats, lamenting storytellers such as Johnny Cash and Charlie Pride, together with the lounge and swing of Dean Martin and Louis Prima, not to mention a wealth of traditional Maltese troubadours.

She taught herself old favourites at the piano, hoping to throw off the shackles of her classical training, but never believed she could move beyond hobbyist tinklings.

"I was completely petrified," Mama Kin says. "After growing up under two incredibly diverse musical brothers and a really musical family, I think I just made a decision early on that I wasn't good enough, that I wasn't as good as them."

The music stayed close, always bubbling below the surface. But when Mama Kin found love, and then married Australia's pre-eminent roots rocker, John Butler, her musical insecurities intensified. She became central to The John Butler Trio entourage, also steering The Seed Fund - a philanthropic foundation established to support emerging musicians and artists - and laid her musical aspirations to rest once more.

It wasn't until she sat with her husband's lap steel guitar one night that Mama Kin penned her first tune, a song called Woman's Life, which eventually made its way onto her debut EP Papoose. She started to write regularly, and soon discovered her voice as a songwriter in her own right.

With a small collection of tracks under her belt, Caruana approached her brother Nicky to record some demos. The siblings discussed the idea of forming a band called Kin. It was then that Caruana discovered she was pregnant with her second child. "Well, I guess that makes you Mama Kin," Nicky laughed. The name stuck.

Still more of a songwriting exercise than an intention to launch a musical career, the songs from this session were shelved as Mama Kin immersed herself in the role of motherhood.

Coaxed into performing a string of house concerts, she shared songs that grappled with the very fragility and inhibition that prevented her from living her dream. This intense honesty, vulnerability and her charming sense of humour, tapped a cord with her audiences and they embraced the stories, the pain and the confessionals. They wanted more.

The time had come when the desire to share her music outweighed the fear. "I now had two children and every day I urged them to follow their dreams, to live truthfully and courageously," Mama Kin says.





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"It seemed a little hypocritical that there I was, crippled by fear, shunning my own ambitions. I didn't believe in myself, but I wanted them to dream freely and fully. How could they, if I didn't show them an example of what it is to be self expressed, and to take risks?"

Each night Mama Kin sat at her vintage Wurlitzer organ as her cubs slept, and the songs flowed. Tapping into her own unique style, blending filthy swamp back-beats with intimate ballads and lyrical yearnings, both revealing and humane, Mama Kin found her groove.

Her debut album, **Beat and Holler**, is a combination of songs that she says ranges from "r-o-a-r to r-a-w". "I either want to be moved emotionally or moved physically by music," Mama Kin says. "If not both at the same time!"

Mama Kin's musical journey has now come full circle as it is Brother Michael who warms the stage beside her, taking up duties on the keys as well as sharing a handful of songwriting credits with his little sister.

"Michael and I speak the same language, we have the same musical references," Mama Kin says. "Playing with Michael I sometimes feel like the awestruck younger sibling. But mostly I feel like I am getting the opportunity of a lifetime to share this with someone I love and respect both creatively and personally. Humour and music binds us. I couldn't have done this without Brother Michael."

Mama Kin says creating **Beat and Holler** felt like the biggest risk she could take. But working with producer Tony Buchen, the leap was as exhilarating as it was challenging. "It shook my foundations of safety and of staying in support roles," Mama Kin explains. "Honesty and humility were high, and we all dug deep to convey the spirit of the songs. We laughed so hard so often, and I think that was our glue."

The album's debut single *Tore My Heart Out* has already proven popular with audiences and critics alike, and was a finalist in the International Songwriting Competition. *Tore My Heart Out* was named single of the week by The Daily Telegraph, iTunes and The Sunday Telegraph, and the accompanying video clip was Rage Indie Clip of the Week.

The second single, *To My Table*, while equally saturated in soul, bristles with New Orleans swamp and a foot-stomping groove, and has solidified Mama Kin's penchant for exploring the fragilities of the human condition. These songs herald the arrival of an artist with a Joplin-era spunk, laced with a playful yet commanding presence.

Similarly, in the live arena, Mama Kin is seducing audiences across the globe. Thriving on the visceral connection with her audiences, Mama Kin's honest reflections and soul-baring truths, peppered between songs, have proven as popular with festival and club crowds as her open-hearted tunes. On stage she is powerful, vulnerable and mischievous, wowing audiences from the Woodford Folk Festival to WOMADelaide, Byron Bay Bluesfest, the West Coast Blues'n'Roots festival and beyond.



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