

the SHEILA KIRSTEN HUGHES *band*



Sheila Kirsten Hughes Band is an acclaimed artist on the Florida State Touring Roster and the Southern Artistry Registry.

ABOUT *the band*

Mission Statement:

Everyone wants to be the sun that lights up your life, but I'd rather be your moon so I can shine on you during your darkest hour when your sun is not around.

-Unknown

Inspired by the courage with which people maintain the struggle against overwhelming odds, the Sheila Kirsten Hughes Band delivers emotional tales of triumph and adversity—some haunting, some surreal, others based on real-life issues. The band's captivating live performance has been described as "beautiful, raw emotion in audio form." (-Cindy Lucas, WBSP Radio)

In recent news, the Sheila Kirsten Hughes Band's song "Let It Rain Down" off their latest CD, *Perspectives*, received an "Honorable Mention" in the 2007 Singer/Songwriter Awards, a London-based international songwriting competition. They were also a Semifinalist in the 2007 Independent Music World Series, a Disc Makers competition. Plus, they were one of just 25 artists selected for the 2008-2010 Florida State Touring Roster by the Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs. In May, 2008, the band teamed up with James Geiger and Wesley Greene of JWG Productions to create their very first MTV-style music video for the song "Different People." The gripping video shines the light on society's forgotten, misunderstood, and unwanted. The band premiered it to a full house at Sacred Grounds Coffeehouse, a well-known gem of a gathering place in Tampa, Florida, on June 7, 2008. In July, 2008, the Sheila Kirsten Hughes Band teamed up with JWG Productions once again, this time at the request of Willie Nelson's Peace Research Institute (PRI) website (www.willienelsonpri.com), which asked the band to create their version of Willie Nelson's song "A Peaceful Solution." Willie Nelson's PRI website began featuring the video on August 31, 2008, to great critical acclaim. Both videos can now be viewed on the Sheila Kirsten Hughes Band's official YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/skhughesband.

At its core, the Sheila Kirsten Hughes Band is a husband-and-wife team comprised of singer/songwriter Sheila Kirsten Hughes on guitar, piano, cello, and fiddle, and sound engineer Chris Hughes on double bass, electric bass, percussion, sequences, and keyboards. Additional members include multiinstrumentalist Alex Wolfe Parnes on drums, percussion, guitar, and keys.

Sheila and Chris met more than a decade ago when they literally collided while extreme skating on the streets of Downtown St. Petersburg, Florida. Chris grabbed hold of Sheila and didn't let go until the fumbling and flailing stopped. He looked into her eyes with a genuine look of concern. "Are you OK?" he asked. In that moment, Sheila knew he was the one. They have been together ever since and playfully argue to this day over who ran into who.

Sheila, once an aspiring musician, had completely abandoned her musical aspirations shortly before she met Chris. Chris knew nothing of her dream until some months later when, much to his surprise, he heard her play Guns 'n Roses' "November Rain" on his parent's piano.

"If you've got a dream, you can't let it die! You've got to go for it!" Chris insisted.

Chris became an immediate source of encouragement to Sheila and jumped in head



BOOKING & INFO

Chris Hughes

Nubzilla Records

813-760-1829

booking@skhughes.com

info@skhughes.com



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first to help get her going again. Chris moved into position as engineer and personal manager to launch Sheila's solo career. A jack of all trades, Chris's extensive knowledge of electronics and engineering became increasingly useful in their pursuits. (Chris began his love affair with sound equipment at age 14 when a family friend gave him a car-stereo amplifier, which he in turn installed into a car that didn't even run – you could see where his priorities were. Chris quickly became one of the most sought-after custom car stereo installers amongst his peers at the time.) In addition, Chris's early experiences "managing" the local garage band Black Rose gave him a little knowledge and know-how in the music biz.

In 1998, Two Snoring Dogs Studio was born in the spare bedroom of Chris and Sheila's home to meet Sheila's recording needs. The studio has seen them through 4 independently-recorded albums, including *Light* (2001), *Sheila Kirsten Hughes* (self-titled, 2002), *Soggy Blue Cornflakes* (4-song EP, 2002), and *Perspectives* (2006), as well as many other artist's projects. The once humbly-small studio is now nearly overtaking their house.

Sheila's early performances consisted mostly of open mics in the Tampa Bay area. She was received with great enthusiasm and word of her quality spread quickly throughout the Bay Area's artist community. Her "championship voice" (-Pete Gallagher, WMNF 88.5FM) won accolades and drew a broad range of comparisons. Vocally, she's said to fall somewhere between Joss Stone and Norah Jones, with the emotional intensity of Björk and the angelic sweetness of Sarah McLachlan or Alison Krauss. Many referred to Sheila as having "the voice of an angel." Platinum-selling Recording Artist and former Broadway star Robin McNamara later coined the epithet "blues angel" when referring to Sheila's emotionally-charged, soulful voice.

People were highly complimentary of Sheila's talents, but Sheila and Chris were also amazed by the extent of incredible talent they were encountering along their journey. Eager to help put the Tampa Bay music scene on the map, Sheila and Chris began devising plans to promote it. Nothing really panned out until 2002 when Sheila stumbled upon the newly developed Soul City Café website – a program for independent artists created by Recording Artist Jewel.

Soul City Café embarked upon its cyber mission of promoting independent artists by featuring a handful of artists that Jewel and her mother Lenedra had discovered during their travels, including now-famous Jason Mraz. Next, they invited people to become members of the Soul-City-Café online community, then asked those members to develop similar websites to promote the artists within their own communities.

Sheila, a web-savvy graphic designer, and Chris immediately went to work developing Nubzilla's Café, a website to promote artists in and around the Tampa Bay area, under the umbrella of their newly formed independent record label, Nubzilla Records (www.nubzilla.com). They employed their monster-sized, 33lb. jack russell terrier, known to the world as "Nubzilla," as their mascot. Soul City Café soon linked Nubzilla's Café up as one of their "satellite sites" and began featuring the works of many of the Nubzilla's-Café featured artists on Soul City Café.

Meanwhile, on October 3, 2002, Sheila made her live-radio debut on WMNF 88.5FM in Tampa, Florida, in conjunction with the release of her 3rd home-recorded album, the 4-song, WMNF-benefit EP *Soggy Blue Cornflakes*. Friends and fans tuned in across the globe.

Afterwards, emails came pouring into the station from as far away as London, England in praise of the songstress for what one described as an "unbelievable" performance. Sheila's newfound success continued later that same month when she made her television debut on the cable access show "What's It All About" in Tampa, Florida. Soon after, Sheila and Chris began working on her

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Chris Hughes

Nubzilla Records

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booking@skhughes.com

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first full-production album, *Perspectives* – a project that would take the pair 4 years to create in their home studio.

In March 2003, Sheila was thrust in the international spotlight when Dale Kirby, Jewel's former Brand Manager, called. They wanted to feature Sheila on Soul City Café for her musical talents as well as for her contributions to the Tampa-Bay artist community through her work on Nubzilla's Café. They called Sheila a "champion of local music," and went on to say, "...a voice that's both powerful and delicate, incredible range vocally and stylistically...What's not to love?...We absolutely must let the world know about this extraordinary individual!" The month-long feature introduced Sheila's music to thousands of people across the globe.

Though Soul City Café did not survive more than a year beyond its inception, Nubzilla's Café carried on the torch and expanded its territory by urinating all over the United States...uh...that is, by featuring artists from across the United States for several years. In 2008, in light of the rise of many social-networking and self-promotional websites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Myspace, Nubzilla's Café became less and less relevant as a promotional vehicle for independent artists. Nubzilla's Café now exists in archival form on the web as a tribute to the many artists it once celebrated.

After performing and recording for a couple of years, it didn't take long for Sheila to realize she enjoyed music most when she got to perform with friends. She set out to form a band, but after several failed attempts, became discouraged by the process. That's when Chris and Sheila decided that together they would become the band.

Chris, once only comfortable behind a mixer, joined Sheila on stage in 2004. He started with upright bass, learning as he went along. He has since expanded his repertoire to include percussion and, most recently, keyboards, all the while continuing his engineering duties directly from the stage.

Also in 2004, Sheila began learning violin, the only instrument on which she is not self-trained. Then in 2005, she gravitated toward the cello when she discovered a natural ability with the instrument.

Chris and Sheila began putting their newly-acquired musical skills to work while recording *Perspectives*. Swelling orchestras, driving rhythms, and thumping bass riffs were no longer an untouchable dream – they were becoming a reality as Chris and Sheila's musical abilities improved.

As the band geared up for their 2006 release of *Perspectives*, something magical happened. They met Alex Wolfe Parnes, one of the nicest, most diverse, and least egotistical musicians they've had the pleasure of running across. Alex joined Chris and Sheila primarily as drummer and percussionist, though this multiinstrumentalists' musical abilities extend far beyond that realm of rhythm. They have been working with Alex as often as possible ever since.

Joined by a slew of extraordinary musicians on stage, *Perspectives* was released on December 5, 2006, with a celebratory show at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center's TECO Theater. The album took more than 4 years to make and has more than 4,000 hours of recording time invested in it. Some of the songs on *Perspectives* are as much as 64 tracks deep with instrumentation and vocals. All of the songs were fully produced and performed by Chris and Sheila in their live-in studio, with special guest guitarist Tomi on "Change," "Lay It Down," and "Come Undone." Their goal was to create an album full of dramatic tension swelling with emotional triumph. The result is "an artful project that aims for something unique...Key to the band's sonic weave is Hughes' soulfulness, which lends a consistently moody mien to the proceedings." (*-Music Connection*)

The Sheila Kirsten Hughes Band plans to begin work on their 5th album with Alex Wolfe Parnes in the Summer of 2009. The release date for the album has not yet been set.

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info@skhughes.com



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