

SISTER MARY SPEAKS

Vocalist's Role with Queensrÿche Continues to Expand

By BRIAN J. HEATON

Pamela Moore has had a pretty diverse career. Although the singer is widely known for being the riveting voice of "Sister Mary" on Queensrÿche's legendary concept album, *Operation: Mindcrime*, she's also released her own recordings, contributed her voice to various radio and television commercials, and has a background in theater.

The latter came in handy over the past two years, as Moore joined Queensrÿche for an extensive world tour, reprising and expanding her familiar role as the love interest of "Nikki," *Operation: Mindcrime's* central character. Changes to her customary performance included additional vocal duties and acting out her character's parts on stage - a dramatic performance she was excited to have the opportunity to portray.

"This time around I was able to sing more and help out on vocals," Moore explained. "The latter part of the year we really concentrated on bringing to life the Mindcrime show. Since I do have a theater background it was very enjoyable to pull that out again."

While she was satisfied by her performance, the Seattle vocalist wasn't aware just how graphic the Sister Mary death scene was, as the character commits suicide by putting a bullet in her head.

"I didn't realize it was so bloody," Moore admitted. "At the time [the show] was being rehearsed, I was on my honeymoon and wasn't able to return until a day before the tour started."

Moore originally was contacted by the band to record the vocal parts for Sister Mary after the band discovered her doing radio and television commercials for a music store she was working at part time in the late 1980s. The audition was a whirlwind one, as former guitarist Chris DeGarmo called her one day asking if she was interested, and the next day Moore was in Montreal, where *Operation: Mindcrime* was being recorded.





After DeGarmo and vocalist Geoff Tate explained the album's concept and the character to her, Moore was given a tape to listen to, and recorded her parts the next morning. It was a performance that Moore never expected to resonate so deeply with fans 17 years later.

"To this day, *Operation: Mindcrime* and Sister Mary are alive as ever," she said, sounding surprised. "I don't see signs of it stopping any time soon. It's incredible!"

The popularity of *Operation: Mindcrime*, more than 15 years after it was performed for the first time, is nothing short of astounding. The interest is so high, that Queensrÿche have backed off their statement from 1992 that declared they would never again perform the album in its entirety. That change of heart led to the recent expanded live production of the record and the recording of *Operation: Mindcrime II*, the highly anticipated sequel, due out on Sanctuary Records in January 2006.

But while other bands have written concept albums, it was the shocking realism and interaction between Moore and Tate that awed audiences and cemented the Mindcrime story and the song "Suite Sister Mary" in particular, in the minds of so many people. But the effect their duet would have on fans wasn't something planned in the studio, according to Moore.

"Geoff's vocals were already recorded, so I recorded my parts separately," she recalled. "I think the first time we ever sang the song together was when I toured with them on the [Building Empires] tour."

"Nothing can ever compare to the adrenaline rush you get singing in front of so many fans," Moore added. "It was then I realized how fortunate I was to have been able to participate in something so special."

In addition to her performances with Queensrÿche, Moore is quite an experienced live singer, having sung with the legendary Paul Rodgers of Bad Company, and with her cousin, Terri Nunn of Berlin. Singing with Rodgers was something that Pamela couldn't pass up.

"I had the opportunity to sing ... with Paul at a couple of his concerts," Moore explained. "It was awesome as he was a big influence on me when I first started singing, along with Ann Wilson [of Heart]. He still has the 'chops' and looks great too!"

Performing with her cousin was fun, but not as planned, according to the singer.

"It was very impromptu," Pamela admitted. "Terri did a show in Seattle and asked if I wanted to join her on stage. We sang 'Riding on the Metro' together. It was great fun!"

Although her singing career has been a priority over the years, theater always seems to play a role in Moore's life. Although she didn't participate as an actress, AC/DC's Brian Johnson hired Pamela to sing on some songs for a Broadway play – far different from the rock music she's been accustomed to recently.



"I'm not sure where that project is at right now, but I can say the experience was awesome," Moore exclaimed. "[Brian's] a wonderful man to get to know and a very prolific and creative writer too."

Pamela's solo work has also kept her busy. Influenced in the beginning of her career by musicians such as James Taylor, Carol King and Crosby, Stills Nash & Young, the vocalist is also interested in gospel, blues-rock and funk music. That love of different music led Moore to start or work with a number of bands, including the groups Sister Mary and Radar.

The former was a local Seattle-area group that had a demo EP produced by Howard Leese. Although the EP didn't land the band a record deal, the song "Turn Around" was released on an album called *Unsigned Seattle Bands* in 1994.



Radar was a late-1990s hard rock act based in New York. The band apparently lost their singer and being fans of Queensrÿche, looked up Pamela and asked her to join them. Impressed by their music, she joined the band and the group put out *R.P.M.* in 2000, and toured Europe. Although the group had some modest success, circumstances prevented them from working together again.

"We had plans to write and record another album on Kivel Records," Moore revealed. "But after [the events of] 9/11, everything fell apart. We still stay in touch with each other, but have no future plans in the works."

Currently, Pamela is in the studio working on a new project with Benjamin Anderson of Rorschach Test. Although the album is still in the songwriting stage, the vocalist described the work so far as very "new" sounding, quite different than some of music from the 1980s or 1990s. It's something Moore is excited to be creating, and even happier to have found an innovative writing partner to work with.

"[Ben] comes up with wonderful music tracks that showcase the depth of my voice and not just my 'screaming techniques'," raved Pamela about the experience. "I've really enjoyed the writing process with [him]."

Once writing for the album is completed, the singer hopes to work with a person very familiar to Queensrÿche fans – Neil Kernon, the producer of the band's 1986 release, *Rage for Order*. Although nothing is set in stone, both Moore and Kernon have wanted to work together for quite some time and are hoping their schedules match up to make that happen.

Pamela is confident that Kernon's wide-ranging musical background, and the chemistry between herself and Kernon will produce some innovative results.

"He has great intuition and a lot of history in many styles of music," Moore explained. "I feel like he and I really click musically [and] we seem to agree on the 'philosophy' of production. I'm really hoping we can work out the scheduling because I just know we will have an amazing sounding album."

But fans of Sister Mary won't have to wait long before they see Pamela on stage with Queensrÿche again – she's slated to appear on a final leg of the band's "Evening With Queensrÿche" tour that is set to commence in September.

For more information on Pamela Moore, visit her official web site at <http://www.pamelamoore.net>.

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