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'Side F/X' 'Contradictions'

- Genre: 'Rock' - Release Date: '2008'

Our Rating: ★★★★★★☆☆

Based in Washington, D.C., which is probably best known for its decades-old hardcore punk scene, Side F/X (<http://www.sidefxband.net>) is a promising young band rooted in classic-rock aesthetics. In other words, songwriting and melodic playing are tops on their priority list. At a time when the art of penning lyrics is becoming increasingly rare, Side F/X dip into their own lives, and that of their friends, to try and find meaning and catharsis in this troubled world. The group's album, "Contradictions," uses AOR-esque hooks as a blueprint, coloring the shades with the blues ("Her Escape," "Never Forget"), post-punk ("Scattered"), reggae and funk ("My Hero"), and Americana ("Life's Mystery"). Sultry-voiced lead singer Kim Cameron is a frontwoman who projects as much strength as she does warmth; that, in itself, is a contradiction, right? I decided to talk to Cameron about the group.

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Adam Harrington: At what point did you decide to enter the rock & roll arena?

Kim Cameron: I grew up with a father who was a true rock & roll fan. We used to dance in the living room to Cat Stevens, the Eagles, Elvis, the Beatles, the Beach Boys, etc., while my mother would never entertain anything other than classical sounds. It was a very diverse household when one parent is turning up the stereo and the other is running to the other side of the house telling him to "turn it down." (Although she did like Cher – go figure.) It never occurred to me, given my childhood to go any other direction. My first band was in high school, so I guess I entered the rock & roll arena around the age of 17.

Harrington: Who are your artistic influences?

Cameron: Without sounding a little eclectic, Carly Simon, Dave Matthews, Annie Lennox, Sting, U2. I was asked, "who do you listen to, or who is on your iPod?" and I rambled off a variety of artists ranging from country to rap to pop to classical to rock. I guess you would say I have a love of all types of music or that I am bored easily. My co-writer was enamored with the hardcore metal sound since he was a child: Van Halen, Ozzy Osbourne, the Scorpions. You will often hear him brag about his love of those distortion sounds, but at the heart of his creative spirit is a true romantic. Like me, he has diverse tastes, which has always made for some interesting music-writing discussions.

Harrington: Some bands forget the word business in the music business. How involved are you with that aspect of the group?



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Cameron: As a former executive in the corporate world, I am heavily involved from a business perspective, from every aspect (image, marketing, web presence, logo, events, trademarks, merchandise and strategy). I actually am looking at this endeavor in a completely different way than I believe other bands or musicians might. It's not enough to come prepared to practice and on time, or to conduct yourself as a professional. It has to extend beyond the professionalism aspect and performing well into providing a product that extends beyond a single, beyond an album. An extension that can sustain itself, even when economics might discourage the venture.

Harrington: Side F/X - what does it mean?

Cameron: Side F/X is a bit of a play on words and really my co-writer's initial vision. When we formed the band, we considered ourselves as a 'side effect' to rock & roll. We wanted to splash a little bit of jazz and R&B into the songs, but just as an 'effect' to the core rock roll feel. As the band progressed, the band members took on the name as well by positioning themselves during our shows as Kim's "Side Effects." I like to think of Side F/X as a name that represents what our music might do to someone – kind of like a prescription – if taken in large doses, you might find yourself dancing uncontrollably or singing loudly in public places.

Harrington: What tracks on "Contradictions" are most personal to you and why?

Cameron: All of the songs are written from personal experiences from either myself or people who I know and have shared their stories with me. The best stories, I believe, are the ones which are real and portray one's soul. Having said that, there are three songs, in particular, that continue to evoke an emotional and physical response from me: "Life's Mystery"; "My Hero"; "Come A Little Closer." In order to understand my emotion behind these songs, I should elaborate on the stories themselves.

"Life's Mystery": I wrote this song trying to describe a unique and special relationship I have with an individual. Now I will never tell anyone (and I mean anyone) who this story is about, but I can tell you that like so many of us, there is always that one person in your life who means something special to you, a feeling that is not always easy to describe, but forces you to put a smile on your face and you do not know why. A kind of deep friendship that lasts a life time, no matter how long or how often you see each other - it's just one of life's mysteries.

"My Hero": This one always brings tears to my eyes. Imagine risking your life for five years, five years in a deadly country and coming back home feeling like your contribution meant nothing. I met a soldier who had just come off his second tour of duty who struck my soul - not because he was in Iraq, not because he defended our country - but because he dedicated years of his life for us, all of us, and all he wanted in return was to know that it mattered. This song was the hardest song I ever had to record because of my emotion associated with his story. You will notice a reggae-type of sound which was very intentional, kind of a happy marching beat but then in the middle of the song (the bridge) you will hear the song breaks down. That again was intentional to denote the conflict the soldier felt about leaving the army.

"Come A little Closer": This song has a completely different emotion than the other two, a kind of mischievous feeling about my own experience with temptation. I have intentionally left the ending up to the listener to decide what happened because we have all faced temptation at one point in our life – some give in, while others keep it at bay. I believe this not so light-hearted song represents a true feeling and struggle that we all have at different points in our life.

author: Adam Harrington