

“I’ve always admired Donna’s voice; her songwriting is poignant and heartfelt”  
Madonna

Fearlessly and fortuitously, singer and songwriter Donna De Lory has always followed divergent musical roads. The petite, vivacious brunette with the mighty voice dallied in the mainstream as Madonna’s sassy tour sidekick for over a decade, but her own parallel journey as a solo artist follows a more eclectic muse.

A devoted student of yoga and spiritual teachings, De Lory’s lushly conceived solo albums, like her 2009 ecstatic groove *Sanctuary*, are not only inspired by Western pop, but Indian devotional music, Sanskrit mantras, Northern African grooves, psychedelic arrangements, and dance beats. Donna blends her rich spiritual practice, sonic collages and surprising musical inspirations into a sumptuous confluence of world music-meets-traditional chanting. Musician and Jivamukti Yoga founder Sharon Gannon dubbed De Lory’s style “the perfect combination of earth Mama and fairy child, with a voice that oscillates between the passionate laments of Janis Joplin and the crystal clarity of Enya.”

With *Sanctuary*, her most recent solo album, De Lory has crafted an expressive, spiritual journey that embraces her passionate exploration of yoga and meditative music, inspired by the transcendent, sophisticated lead of artists like Peter Gabriel, Kate Bush and George Harrison. In fact, the late Beatles guitarist was very much on De Lory’s mind whilst recording.

“As a child, my first taste of Eastern philosophy was through Harrison’s ‘My Sweet Lord,’” she explains. “I was a kid, chanting ‘Hare Krishna’ and the name of God, and I didn’t even know what it meant. But Harrison made it into a huge pop song. It’s all about your intention.”

De Lory’s sessions for the seven tracks on *Sanctuary* were a family affair. She reached out to trusted collaborators like cellist Cameron Stone, drummer and percussionist Dave Allen, guitarist Jerry Leonard and bassists Mark Browne and Mark Gorman. In addition, De Lory recruited special guests like guitarists James Harrah (Madonna, Aretha Franklin) and Brazil’s Heitor Piera on “Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu” as well as Kirtan master Dave Stringer on the track “Bathe In These Waters.” As she had done with her 2006 album *Sky is Open*, De Lory sought out acclaimed producer/engineer Kevin Killen (Peter Gabriel, Kate Bush, Elvis Costello) to mix the album, a process Killen said he enjoyed immensely, given the vivacity of the collaboration and the “integrity” and “very emotional” quality of Donna’s voice and music.

De Lory, who worked with Killen in his street-level Manhattan studio, found unexpected inspiration in the cacophonous backbeat of New York, despite the pastoral birth of the album itself at her Topanga Canyon studio overlooking the Santa Monica Mountains.

“As I worked on the tracks, I looked out high above the trees on to hawks flying and beautiful sunsets,” says De Lory. “I would take my rough mixes and go hiking through native oak trees to get perspective on the music. It was such a different experience to be

in New York mixing [the album] with Kevin. It gave me an energy and perspective that someone in the city would have listening to the music. People living in the energy of the big city life with all of its distractions and over-stimulation need this kind of music in such a deep way.”

With the healing grace of *Sanctuary*, De Lory has created a joyful, mellifluous confluence of her many creative – and philosophical - tangents. She speaks honestly about her early dreams of pop stardom countered by her discovery of a more spiritual self that could be reflected in songwriting. It’s been a life’s work, this music, and De Lory knows it’s a meaningful place not only for her, but her fans.

“Playing music is my yoga,” says De Lory. “It’s my bliss. When I play, I get lost in the music, my mind stops, I am in the moment and I am free. This is a place I never want to leave.”