

'Drive' evident at Waters' Rayne concert

Rayne's former Shelly Pellerin returns home for CD release party

By Steve Bandy
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RAYNE – It had been a long time since Shelly Pellerin performed here – about 25 years.

Her “homecoming” concert – now as Shelly Waters – Saturday night at the American Legion Home was filled with emotion.

“It was great, but at the same time, hard to explain,” Waters said during a breakfast interview the following morning before she and her band left for home.

“I didn’t know how I would be received,” she explained.

As Shelly Pellerin, Waters was well-known throughout the area, constantly taking the stage during festivals and even fronting her own band after graduating from Rayne High School in 1986.

Then she graduated from USL (now University of Louisiana – Lafayette) in 1990, married and moved to Baton Rouge.

“I stepped away from music then,” she said. “My guitar spent 10 years in the closet.”

But that longing was still there and when she decided to act on it, she did.

“I packed up my guitar and moved to Houston,” she said. “I performed with a band and as part of a duo.”

It was in Houston that she met Dave Waters, who would become her second husband and sometimes share the stage with her. “He had a full drum set when we met,” Shelly explained.

Nine years ago, when Dave Waters’ medical practice took him to Charleston, South Carolina, they moved there. And Shelly kept performing – with a band, in a duo (still occasionally with Husband Dave) and as a solo act.

“It really wasn’t until a couple of years ago that it hit me,” she said. “I was on stage, I think during a ‘band gig’ and this feeling just came over me. This is what I want to do. This is what I was meant to do.”

Shortly thereafter she put out her first CD, a collection of swamp pop songs.

“But that really wasn’t me,” Waters said.

Saturday night’s concert in Rayne doubled as the local “release party” for her new CD, “Drive,” a collection of self-written songs.

“I wrote all of the songs on this record, with a co-writer on one, so all of the music has a real taste of me and the genres that I like,” she said, adding, “It’s really all over the place and each song has its own little story.”

The first track, “This Old House,” was the opening number of the second set Saturday night.

“I want to dedicate this to my mom and dad and thank both of you for everything,” she said from the stage. “I wrote this thinking about the house we lived in for the first five years of my life.” Her parents are Jimmie and Charlene

Pellerin of Rayne.

Another song, “Need to Rest,” was inspired by a little bird that landed on the bow of the boat she and her husband were sailing. “It was tired and couldn’t fly away so it just kind of sat there on the deck with the waves coming over the bow, resting,” she said. “When it was ready, it flew off. I think that told me that it’s okay to just sit back and take a breather sometimes.”

The title song, “Drive,” she explained was inspired by a story she read about a man who always dreamed of driving cross-country but never got around to and ultimately died of cancer.

“He left his car to his son and the son decided he was going to fulfill his father’s dream,” she said.

“That story – that song is sort of a metaphor for my music career,” Waters said. “I decided this is what I want to do and now is the time to do it. Life’s too short.”

She said she wrote the songs for “Drive” in about a week. In fact, she sent “about 15” to Joe Taylor, who produced the CD.

“He narrowed it down to nine and decided we needed one more to round it out,” she said. “So I went home that night and wrote the last song.”

It was during the recording of the CD that her new band was formed.

Taylor, a Grammy-nominated guitarist with his own studio, bassist Sean O’Byan Smith and drummer Blair Shotts were doing studio work for other artists at the time.

“We mostly worked with young, aspiring artists who wanted to make their own CD,” Smith said during a break Saturday night. “But when Shelly came in, she was a polished professional. I told Joe, ‘We’ve got to play with her.’”

Before long they were opening for Loretta Lynn.

“These guys are really talented and I can’t believe I’m sharing a stage with them,” Waters said of her bandmates. “I’m so lucky.”

After this weekend’s road trip – they played in Mobile, Alabama, Friday night before the Rayne concert Saturday – the band members will be returning home: Waters and Taylor to Charleston, Smith to Nashville and Shotts to Los Angeles.

“Yeah, we’re kind of scattered,” Waters laughed. “That’s why we have to cluster our shows right now.”

Meanwhile, Waters said she’ll keep busy with solo and duo (with Dave) performances until the next “tour” comes up.

“I’m hoping we can do another ‘I-10 trip’ and play some more around here,” she said. “We’ve submitted (proposals) to some area festivals.”

And there’s more “original Shelly” in the works.

“I already have my next CD in my head,” she said.

(Additional pictures and concert info will be carried in next week’s newspaper.)



Shelly Pellerin Waters and band perform at the American Legion Home as part of her CD release of “Drive.” (Photos by Lisa Soileaux)