

SHEILA O'CONNOR

Chatting With Lionel Richie and Kenny Rogers

The two stars discuss their musical friendship at the Romantic Rhythms Music Festival in Antigua

By YUAN YUAN
Epoch Times Toronto Staff

NORTH SOUND, Antigua—You might think that music legends Lionel Richie and Kenny Rogers had little in common, despite both being veteran musicians with a combined 165 million albums sold, eight Grammy Awards, and 90 years as active performers. But as we learned at the 2008 Antigua and Barbuda Romantic Rhythms Music Festival, these two have a bit of a history together.

Richie sat down with reporters before performing on stage at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium on Friday, June 13. The next day, Kenny Rogers stopped by before his show and asked about Richie. The Epoch Times was there.

Question: What was your first impression of Antigua?

Lionel Richie (LR): You can't help but be inspired. That's the wonderful part about this. I've been traveling the world, and I'm amazed that I can come to a place and it still fascinates me. How did I miss this [place—Antigua]? If you feel the vibe, you'll write the song. If you're around movie people, all they want to do is see what that existence is, and they'll go back and make a movie out of it, or use it as a destination. I use it as a song. So just understand me that this vibe here is something that will trigger something in me that will come back and end up in a song.

Q: So is this where you got the vibe for "All Night Long," in the Caribbean?

LR: Believe it or not, that's where the vibe came from. I'm one of those guys that—I don't look for something new. I look for what people do every day. And I noticed that,

anytime I would come on vacation, everybody who can rap is on vacation doing a calypso dance. Everybody who's singing opera, they conform to some form of calypso or some form of reggae. So when I went back to do "All Night Long," it was very simple. All I had to do was find that beat that everybody dances to when they go on vacation. That was "All Night Long."

Q: What do you prefer, writing or singing?

LR: The writing is something that touches me because when people walk up to you and say, "I was engaged on your song. I was married on your song. I had kids on your song. I got divorced on your song. ... My mother was buried on your song. ..." You have no idea how they've taken these songs and applied them to their lives. The writing is actually something where I write something that you would want to say, but didn't know how.

Q: Have you ever performed with Kenny Rogers in the Caribbean?

LR: Actually I did twice, on the Country Music Awards; he didn't

'...we are the best when it comes to kidding around on stage.'

—Lionel Richie speaking of Kenny Rogers

know I was coming, and I was hiding out in Dottie West House, 'cause remember now, Nashville—I'm sure is just like here—if one person knows it on the island, the whole island knows it. Well Nashville is the same way. They wanted me to surprise him. So when this show started, I was living at Dottie West House for that day. And then that night they snuck me to the show. When he went out to sing "Lady"—at the second verse I came out from behind the curtain and the crowd was just, you know, and I surprised Kenny.

The second time I went to one of his concerts. And I'm sitting in the audience, trying to enjoy his show. And Kenny said, "What are you doing out there, come on stage!" [laughter]

But honestly, I'm so sorry I'm not going to be here tomorrow night, because truthfully, we are the best when it comes to kidding around on stage. I don't know if you've ever seen us on television together, but we're the biggest jokesters together. So we don't have to rehearse anything. We just go on stage, and you get to see the benefits of just friendship. 'Cause he's been that way since I've ever met him.

SAIL AWAY: Kenny Rogers performed the night after Lionel Richie at the Romantic Rhythms Music Festival in Antigua.

PAUL HAWTHORNE/GETTY IMAGES



ALL NIGHT LONG: Lionel Richie answers reporters' questions at the Romantic Rhythms Music Festival in Antigua. THE EPOCH TIMES

The Next Day ...

Kenny Rogers (KR): Did Lionel sing "Lady" last night?

[Reporters argue whether he did or not.]

KR: I sent word to him, "Do not sing that song." He wrote it, and I said, "Wait, wait, wait. That's my song. Find your own song." [laughter]

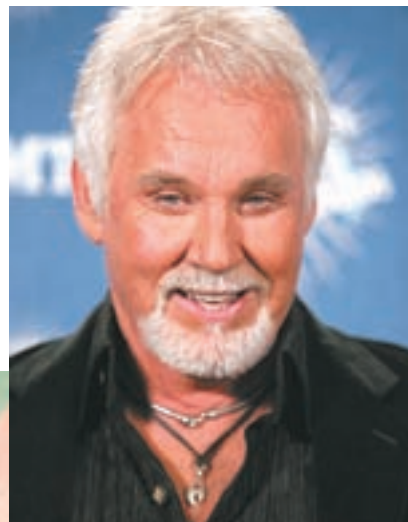
Q: But he sang "Stuck on You."

KR: Oh, that's a great song. The great thing about him is that he's got so many world-class songs that fit into that groove thing you're talking about. I'm sorry I missed him, because we're really good friends. We see each other about every ten years, but when we do it's really fun.

Q: Give us a little more background on your history with Lionel.

KR: When he was with the Commodores, that group was breaking up and he was living in Tuskegee [Alabama]. And I said, "You need to come to L.A. if you're going to get involved in the music business." So I literally brought him to L.A. and he lived in my guesthouse. Which he never paid rent on, I might add. [laughter]

He's just such a special person. He's got so much heart. He wrote a song that I'm doing on my new album called "It's not Easy to Say Goodbye," and it's about when his mom died. And he said it took him five years to address that. But it's just a wonderful piece of music.



BEASTIE DIRECTOR: Director of "Gunnin' For That #1 Spot" and member of the Beastie Boys hip-hop group, Adam Yauch. OSCALLOSCOPE

Beastie Boy Adam Yauch on His New Documentary

Gunnin' For That #1 spot' explores elite high school basketball

By CARY DUNST
Epoch Times New York Staff

NEW YORK—A high school basketball tournament may sound like a simple and underwhelming subject for a feature documentary. However, "Gunnin' For That #1 Spot" takes the occasion of the 2006 Elite 24 Hoops Classic as a window into the unique lives of premier high school athletes. Pursued by sneaker companies, college recruiters, and the media, these basketball prodigies must make choices at a young age that they hope will lead them to the NBA.

Directed by Adam Yauch

(known as "MCA" of the hip-hop trio Beastie Boys), "Gunnin'" introduces eight of the country's top high school basketball players, and follows them as they compete in an all-star game at the center of street basketball—Rucker Park in Harlem, New York.

Yauch skillfully portrays the athletes with their varied backgrounds and common experiences, and mixes in their jaw-dropping basketball highlights set to a street-wise sound track that he personally picked.

Yauch was on hand in New York on June 19, at the Regency Hotel, to meet with the press and talk about his filmmaking experience. Since he is an internationally recognized musician, one of the first questions was about him being the larger celebrity to these rising stars who are accustomed to the spotlight.

"I don't know. These kids are pretty young," explained Yauch. "Some of them probably heard of Beastie Boys. I don't know if they really listened to Beastie Boys. I remember Dante Green's coach going up to him and saying, 'Do you know who that is? I used to listen to "Brass Monkey"' and then Dante looked and said, 'Oh, I should be shaking your hand!'"

While the first few cuts on "Third" succeed in soothing and arousing the senses, "We Carry On" and "Machine Gun" contend with murky, hymns and a forward-driving march offering a precise balance to the rest of record.

The last track, "Threads," ranges from quiet to loud groove as Gibbons cries of her affliction: "I'm always, so unsure." The piece finally fades out, leaving a rebellious saxophone repeatedly sounding off like a Viking battle horn.

Geoff Barrow and Adrian Utley are the longtime contributors to Portishead, providing the sampling, programming, and instrumentation for each of the band's records. Each song on "Third" is a carefully constructed work of subtle perfection having its own very unique and independent form of existence.

It is quite obvious that in the seemingly long hiatus from the band's last record, Barrow and company have been hard at work painting musical portraits that are as alive and breathing as they are profound and fulfilling.

The film's music selections range from raw hip-hop to jazz and break beats, and Yauch described how he determined the soundtrack: "Stuff that I liked or seem to feel right in a scene. A lot of it is New York-based hip-hop because the film is really about these guys coming together and playing together in New York."

Contrasting his travels on location to make the film with touring with the Beastie Boys, Yauch said, "When we roll into a city on a tour, we're coming in with, like, busses and a crew and staying at fancy hotels; and this was, like, me and three other guys in a minivan. We drove to Philly and Baltimore and then to Coney Island—staying in crappy hotels; yeah, it was fun [laughing], but it's definitely very different than going on tour."

When asked about if they prepped the kids to be on camera, Yauch said, "We just tried to document them the way that they are. Just shoot them and see what they do—how they handle themselves. When they were in their practices and during their warm-up before the game, we kind of mentioned to [Michael] Beasley, oh we're shooting slow mo, and he was like 'Ohhh!' and he started doing all kinds of wild dunks, and stuff like that, and you know, they kind of showboat anyways."

Naturally, making millions for playing basketball has to cross the minds of these players. Yauch felt, "I think it depends; to some of them it's more important than others. You certainly hear in the profile on Tyreke [Evans]—that everyone around him says that he has no interest in that, that he just likes playing basketball and doesn't even think about that stuff."

"I have a feeling that some of the kids, that's definitely something that they're excited about—the possibility of getting huge contracts and getting all this money. But I did get the impression from all of them that they do love playing basketball."

—Adam Yauch, director

Album Review: Portishead's 'Third' Brilliant Release by English Trip-Hop Trio



TRIP-HOP: Beth Gibbons of Portishead performs at a recent show. The band is back in the spotlight following a 10-year hiatus. KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES

By CHRIS HOLEHOUSE
Epoch Times Ohio Staff

From the outset of Portishead's appropriately titled third release, "Third," the brooding English three-piece band lavishly defines the trip-hop genre, a down-tempo style with heavy drumbeats. Portishead creates an immersive and ambient experiment of sullen grooves backed by driving heartbeat rhythms, a haunting slew of eerie stringed instruments, dark saxophones, and vocalist Beth Gibbons's pleading descent into jazzy isolation.

This album is the third studio release from Portishead, following 1997's self-titled record and 1994's groundbreaking "Dummy," and is easily as electrifying. Portishead has constructed an inescapable world of irresistible and matchless sounds that tug the listener in like a gravitational pull.

The opening track, "Silence," starts with a spoken note in Portuguese and translates as: "You get what

you give, and you will only get what you deserve." As the quote fades, a hypnotic bass line accompanied by a retro, renegade drumbeat serves as prelude to two minutes of beautiful cello and exotic-sounding samples before the lonely singer begins to croon.

The track embodies a certain transcendent vibe that shapes the attitude for the duration of the album. The cryptic journey builds with intensity on "Hunter," in which a rhythmic pulse bellows beneath an enchanted guitar and Gibbons's pensive confession.

The musical composition on "The Rip" serves as an eclectic mirror to the intimate lyrics, invoking a magical feeling as the singer admits, "White horses, they will take me away/ And my tenderness I feel/ Will send the dark underneath."

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