

Dave's True Story occupies a unique niche as a jazz group that plays folk clubs and festivals. Like Susan Werner (an incredible crossover performer who writes both drop-dead gorgeous folk pieces like "Barbed Wire Boys" and sophisticated standards-in-waiting), DTS somehow get away with it by traveling incognito. But wherever they're playing, the group should be seen live.

Eyrich and I struck up an e-mail conversation. He's a musical omnivore, into just about everything. I turned him on to Joey Bishop's country album (imagine a Rat Packer destroying "Cold, Cold Heart") and he countered with Richard Cheese's *Aperitif for Destruction*. I have Eyrich to thank for letting me hear Frank Tedesso, a brilliant singer and songwriter--Van Morrison meets Terry Callier--in whose backup band he toils.

When I asked Eyrich if Dave's True Story would want to be part of the Weekly Song Project, he responded by reaching for his datebook. Several possible nights came and went, but we finally made it into the studio in late July.

Since the idea of the Project is to challenge the musicians, I immediately thought of having them cover April Barrows. We live on a shrinking planet, and it turned out that Eyrich knew Barrows' writing partner, David Hungate (the former bass player in Toto!).

No less than five of Barrows' songs appear on country singer Suzy Bogguss' great 2003 album *Swing*, one of them being "Burning the Toast." It's a very sweet little number about a woman keeping house (not very competently) for her man. Both Bogguss and Barrows herself recorded it as a fast swinger, but Dave's True Story chose to slow it down radically.

### Relaxing in the Studio

The band arrives at Greg Packham's studio on time and ready. Kelly Flint is friendly and talkative. She asks for a bit of reverb in the headphones and shrugs it off when it isn't forthcoming. The band is still working on the song. Flint makes major changes to the bridge, finding a hook in the penultimate line that wasn't there before: "The coffee's weak/But my love is strong/It's got to last the whole day long/'til tomorrow morning when the sun comes shining through/And I'll start all over, burning the toast for you." We all agree it works.

They take their time figuring out how to end the song, too. They finally decide to go back into rhythm for a little coda, during which Flint adds an impromptu "among other things" after her heartfelt promise to burn that toast. We all love that, and go through several takes before we can get it to work as well as it did before the tape started turning (figuratively, the studio is digital).

We start recording and go back to the top after the band forgets the ending they agreed on. Flint wants the intro counted out for her. She aims for perfection and achieves it far more often than most. At one point, she thinks she hears a rare bum note, but everyone assures her it's fine.

Recording with Dave's True Story is very relaxing. Nobody's in a hurry and after five quick takes everybody's happy. The group left a "hole" in the recording for a solo, and Packham finished the tune after-hours with a very Django-ish guitar workout. With work done, there was time to sit and chat awhile. Asked about the group's appeal to folkies, Flint says, "Folk audiences are into the craft of good songwriting. They're less rigid in some ways than jazz audiences."

Flint has a way about her. Five minutes after meeting her I felt like an old friend. So it wasn't at all surprising when she started telling me about her hell-on-wheels childhood in Ohio with a mother who belittled her fledgling work as a vocalist. "She said that children shouldn't sing because they couldn't stay on pitch, so I of course worked at developing the best pitch anyone had ever heard," Flint said.

Even when, at age 13, she sang "My Man" in the spring talent festival and reduced everyone to tears with a stunning rendition of "My Man," Flint's mother thought it was an unrepeatable fluke. The legacy of that was 10 early years being "crushed by experience" in New York as a background vocalist, hiding behind the instruments. "It took me a long time to have any confidence as a singer," she says.

The evidence that she got over all that is in every groove of *Nature*, the fourth album by *Dave's True Story*. As the jacket says, it "blows a cool breeze through the world in which we live." Cantor's hip, wise songs fit Flint like Prada; they're also, like the best standards, built on a foundation of indestructible melody. As *Playboy* describes it, they're "art songs for a new century, spiced with jazz and neon details."

The fall will see two more DTS releases, *Project Remix* (self-explanatory, I would think, but the songs are mostly from *Nature*) in October; and *Simple Twist of Fate*, an all-Dylan enterprise that includes "Big Girl Now," "Just Like a Woman," "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" (all Flint) and "If Dogs Run Free" (Dave Cantor). Seeing that's one of the only jazzy Dylan tunes, it should cap off the album like a nice after-dinner liqueur.

In the meantime, if you want new Dave's True Story music, visit the *Weekly's* website at [www.fairfieldweekly.com](http://www.fairfieldweekly.com) and click on the link to hear "Burning the Toast." While you're there, visit the other entries (there are eight) in the "Weekly Song Project" by entering my name in the search engine.

**Dave's Real Story**  
**New Jazz Standards...for the Folk Clubs**

*By Jim Motavalli*

Dave's True Story's version of "Burning the Toast" has a complicated genesis. It began with April Barrows, a brilliant songwriter originally from Milford but long a resident of Nashville. In 1996 I happened upon Barrows' first album, *My Dream is You* (Kokopelli) in the WPKN music library, and was amazed at her talent. Here was someone virtually channeling the inspired Tin Pan Alley tunesmiths who created the Great American Songbook. She could sing, too!

Do you think it's easy to write songs that become standards? For every "Fly Me to the Moon," "Blame it on My Youth" and "Bye Bye Blackbird" there's a thousand forgettable tunes that never made it off the music paper. The best standards are amazingly durable; they can be bent, spindled and mutilated into bebop, disco or trip hop. Try translating today's pop hits into jazz and the result is an uncomfortable *mélange*. Even Stevie Wonder's wonderful songs can sound flat when moved out of their idiom.



On *My Dream is You* and later on *All You Need is the Girl* (2001), Barrows caught the essence of that Brill Building sound: literate songs that are also bulletproof. How could even the weakest-chinned singer mess up lyrics like these: "Cupid's mighty hot/He took aim and he shot/Cupid got us both with one arrow/Cupid had a plan/He said that gal needs a man/Cupid got us both with one arrow."

I wanted more people to know about April Barrows. Like Guy Davis in blues, Barrows writes new songs that sound old, and that's a rare thing. For a while I was content to just play her on the radio. Then I called her up, found her accessible, and did an on-air interview.

**Close Encounters with Dave**

Years went by, then I happened to be up at WPKN when the Westchester-based swing revivalists from Dave's True Story put in an appearance on Elaine Osowski's show. This is one of my favorite groups: A no-compromises jazz band with sterling songwriting (from guitarist Dave Cantor), fronted by the ringing belltones (or bell-like ringtones) of chanteuse Kelly Flint, all tied together by bassist and sought-after producer Jeff Eyrich. (The drummers change, with the old ones possibly vanishing in a Spinal Tap-like puff of smoke. For our gig they were using New York freelancer George Mel, a great in-the-pocket player from Tbilisi, Georgia who once played in the hot Georgian rock group Limousine.)