

## DANIELA TORCHIA

### *Have No Fear*

(Kiss the Frog Records - 2006)

**Daniela Torchia** has a wonderfully relaxed style and an agile voice that adds comfort to the design of her sophisticated adult contemporary pop style. Spanish born and of Italian/Austrian descent, she radiates warmth with vocal inflections peculiar to Iberians. Imagine if actress Penelope Cruz could sing – who knows, maybe she can - and you have some idea of the appeal of Daniela Torchia's voice: bright in tone, accessible, sultry in a "nice girl next door" sort of way. You can hear tracks from her CD *Have No Fear* at her website at <http://danielatorchia.com>, at **CD Baby** (<http://cdbaby.com/cd/torchia>) and on the **Links at RARWRITER** (<http://www.rarwriter.com/LinksLA.htm> - **DANIELA TORCHIA**).



Daniela circulates among some of rock's more esteemed players, principally **Tony Kaye**, founding keyboardist of the legendary progressive rock band Yes. His other associations include membership in Badfinger and Badger and touring with David Bowie. Kaye served as Executive Producer of the CD, which must have played a part in attracting top level studio talent to the project. (The recorded performance is way at the top end of the pro spectrum.) 7<sup>th</sup> Level Productions studio head **Brian Yaskulka** served as in-studio Producer. Clearly Daniela was communicating her vision for the production, which in general terms is big acoustic-oriented "pop," but by nature is clearly "international." Yaskulka realized this beautifully.

*Have No Fear* opens with the power pop of "Is She Coming Back," which wonders about the inner thoughts and yearnings of a spurned lover. "First Time" is wonderfully Latin in its pop appeal, with **Kevin Holmes** playing beautiful Spanish guitar parts, as he does on several tracks on the LP, and **Cole Coleman** providing stratospheric and atmospheric electric guitar. The song pays tribute to new awakenings and their power to remain in memory as a healing force. "Far Away From Yesterday" opens with a signature Torchia Latin guitar approach (Kevin Holmes again) and details the complete immersion of a new love experience. By this third track the pattern is set - *Have No Fear* is packed with radio friendly sounds. Producer Yaskulka's production is fresh and clean, lush and romantic without being schmaltz. The guitars are beautifully arranged and balanced in the mix, and **Mike Bennet** and **Glen Sobel's** percussion work is particularly musical, arranged as instrumentation as much as emotive force (different from most of what you hear).

Cole Coleman plays acoustic guitar and piano on "You Are the One," another cushy pop confection that grows in its musical footprint in a way that gives it the lift of a soundtrack piece.

"Don't You Worry" is a song that has resonated with reviewers and functions as a secondary manifestation of the CD's title/theme. (We'll get to the song "Have No Fear" in a moment.) The tune starts with a bouncy narrative that sets a three-act play in motion: professional woman slips up in her personal life, confronts obstacles, emerges victorious to a hard-rock refrain of "*Everything's just fine...*"

This narrative morphing in "Don't You Worry" occurs again in "I Promise You," which sections out musically in a way that makes it sound like a compilation of three or four rhythmically mated tunes. The thing that holds them all together is the guitar work of Coleman and **Robin LeMesurier**. One of them is playing tasty licks through what sounds like an *un-effected* Fender Deluxe Reverb and it is delightful to hear.

Delightful guitar playing is everywhere on this album, but most pronounced is that coming through in the Spanish guitar sections. "Take Me As I Am" launches on a classic run into a bed of metal guitar crunch and falls right into a radio groove. This is one of the CD's strongest tracks, lovely to listen to.

Daniela is strong and charming and sings beautifully. She is good at writing bridges and just when you think you've heard her song it does something melodically unexpected, sometimes even temperamentally different.



**Daniela Torchia, from the inner sleeve of *Have No Fear*, in a bed of roses with her Minarik guitars. She is endorsed by Minarik. I love the designs of these things, which might have suggested Goth but remind me more of naturally asymmetrical driftwood shapes; quite unique and beautiful, rather like Daniela herself. - RAR**

“Take Me As I Am” has a section in which pop defiance drifts subtly into a dreamy, unsettled darkness, with dark jazz idiom chords sneaking in to replace the sunnier earlier ones, which return changed. It is handled well and credit must be given to the producers Kaye and Yaskulka. And certainly to Kevin Holmes, with the acoustic guitar licks, who is a credit to his profession.

“Will You” continues this other interesting thing that happens with this CD on a thematic level.

*Have No Fear* grows darker the deeper into it you go, which is sort of brilliant, isn't it? Like fear itself?

“Will You” is a straight-out challenge for “*you...to get out of yourself and give your life for someone else...*” Ouch! Exactly which army is being mustered is unclear, but the song punches out its message with tremendous certainty. Daniela – “Dani” to friends – sings like she might grab you by the ear and drag you into the fray if you don't get off your ass. Robin LeMesurier plays some screaming electric guitar and the whole thing wallops. The song grows again, as they do on *Have No Fear*. It starts sort of “coffee house acoustic” and gets led astray by a guy with a vibrato. It doesn't come back until it has gone through a rock section.

Daniela beautifully self-performs the acoustic solo “Per Te,” which is an exercise in insistent Segovian licks.

Almost before “Per Te” ends, Daniela and the band slips into jazz-blues territory with “So Little Faith.” This is real old school stuff performed lounge style, augmented by the jazz guitar work of **Joe Jewell**.

“Might As Well” returns to formula, building from a percussion track of congas and acoustic guitar to a crunch rock tune. Again, the guitar work of Kevin Holmes supports the track beautifully. Daniela is urging us on again, trying to get us to take a chance. *Might as well make something of your life...be yourself...see where it takes you...* This CD is refreshingly asexual, certainly charged by Daniela Torchia's own charisma, but not focused inward. It's like constructively geared motivational audio.

Twelve tracks in we get to the title track of the CD. Why so late? “Have No Fear” is probably the most sonically forward or adventurous track on the album. It isn't that the basic formula is far different, with the CD's typical mix of acoustic and rock sections, but the boys in the band...they are having fun with this one, and it's fun to listen to. Guitars cry, make spaceship sounds, play Bowie-like figures and LeMesurier ladles on a garage slide.

“Where Do We Go” closes out the album with the words “*where do we go from here if we could let go of all the fear...if the world would end what message do you think we would send...*” Daniela foresees challenges and dark times ahead. There is some screaming wah-guitar on this final track, closing out the CD with energy.

Daniela Torchia is a pro songwriter who surprises with her instincts to roam. That is often not an asset to a songwriter, but it has been put to good use with this collection. Presumably this is to the credit of Kaye and Yaskulka. It takes a lot of sonic space to maximize that approach and it gets the room and support here. The CD is easy to listen to even when it rocks, which is the mark of a top end production.

This CD sounds to me like an international entry, in many ways, and I am not the first to think so. Daniela speaks fluent Spanish and a Spanish-language version of *Have No Fear - Sin Miedo* - with vocals produced by **George Alayon** is available. Daniela is a sophisticated entry who has a lot going for her and she and her radio friendly music may well find success in the domestic market. I wouldn't be at all surprised if Daniela finds success internationally.



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