

# KELLY FINDS HER DESTINY

Kelly Rowland started out in girl group Destiny's Child but now with a new label, new direction and new tour, she's making it on her own – and she's still all about sisterhood, writes **Sally Browne**

KELLY Rowland knows that Australia is the place where the wild things are.

On her last visit with Destiny's Child, a snake dropped into their Brisbane hotel the day before they arrived and the trio were terrified – and thrilled – that it might visit them in the night.

"We were so happy, but I remember all of us had a hard time falling asleep because we were scared the snake was going to come through the airconditioning," she recalls.

Another time she dreamed she was face-to-face with a giant red kangaroo and, she says, she's even had the privilege of being peed on by a koala. (We reckon he was probably just excited to meet her.)

The singer, whose solo career has blossomed with her recent No.1 smash hit, *When Love Takes Over*, has been hanging out with human wild things too.

She was in Australia last month for Sydney's Mardi Gras and Brisbane's Big Gay Day, and will be returning again in just a few weeks time for Supafest (formerly known as Jamfest), for which she will take to the stage with fellow R'n'B stars Akon, Eve, Pitbull, Sean Paul and Jay Sean, as well as Brisbane's own Chris Sorbello.

For those not up to speed, the event changed its name to avoid any legal clashes with Jam Music.

Whatever the event is called, Rowland can't wait.

When she arrives, she will have a swag of new material to showcase. The 29-year-old is working on the finishing touches of her new solo album, which she says is her most personal yet.

In fact, it's an important time for Kelly. Once in the shadows of her more famous Destiny sister, Beyonce, she is now finding that it's her time to shine. The dance hit, *When Love Takes Over*, has been not-so-quietly taking over the world, and even won her and her co-star, French superstar DJ David Guetta, a Grammy. She has been embracing a new urban-meets-dance direction for her new record.

And she also has a new label and new management after parting ways with Beyonce's father, Mathew Knowles, who has managed her since her teens.

"This is definitely my most personal record," Rowland says from her hotel in Sydney (with no snakes, we're assured).

"And my coming-out record as well. I've embraced so many different parts of myself lately. Some parts of myself I didn't know. I knew they were there but it's more tapped into in this record."

What does she mean? "I'm thinking about courage, empowerment, notes I used to be afraid to hit that I hit this record. Things I was scared to try."

"It is a fresh start and I'm excited about my team," she adds. "That's no disrespect to my past team, I'm just really excited about where everybody's headed this time around with Team Kelly."

We all want to be strong and great. So let's be strong and great together

There are lots of people wanting to join Team Kelly. Guetta became a fan when they met at one of his shows in France – she heard his early version of *When Love Takes Over*, loved it, then flew to London where she worked on it with Australian song-writing twins Mim and Live Nervo. The 27-year-olds have also been hitting their stride writing songs for the Pussycat Dolls and Hannah Montana.

"They were so much fun, they were like little jumping beans bouncing off the wall with so much energy," Rowland says. "I love those girls to death."

She also recorded another song with her *Dilemma* co-star Nelly, though that won't appear on this album, and has been in the studio with Rico Love. There's also talk of

her working with Akon, and some shared backstage time at Supafest might make that a reality. As for other co-stars, she'd like to save those as "surprises".

Rowland may have been in the spotlight since she was a teenager, but she has never been one to show off her assets or shake too much booty on the dance floor.

She is the anti-diva, the sweet girl next door, and is perfectly comfortable whether we're talking about peeing koalas, shopping or childhood insecurities. The most important things to her are "faith, family and friends", and she makes sure she prays every day.

She's still that little girl at heart – and it's that little girl that she's honouring right now, not only with her new direction, but also in the charity she has set up called I Heart My Girlfriends.

To be launched this year, I Heart My Girlfriends aims to provide an

all want to be strong. We all want to be great. So let's be strong and great together."

Right on. When asked who is her biggest inspiration, Rowland apologises for her "lame answer" but says:

"My biggest inspiration has probably most recently really been, funny enough and this is probably a lame answer, but the little girl in me, who was always afraid. And I finally feel like I'm really letting her grow and dismissing all fears and things like that. And I just feel like I'm finally letting myself live and not be afraid. So that's a good feeling."

What was she like as a child? "Very shy and very timid," she laughs, "with loads of insecurities."

She admits to being very conscious of her body. "I compared myself all the time as a kid. I wanted to look like Mariah Carey so bad. And I remember my mum was like 'Baby, you're beautiful just the way you are'. And I was like, 'Yeah, I'd be a lot cuter if I was Mariah Carey'."

But not unlike Carey, Rowland's early success thrust her into the spotlight, where her looks, as well as her voice, were judged by industry and public alike.

"You know what? I think that when everybody's looking at you through a microscope that can be challenging," she says. "I think people think that because you're on television you're supposed to be an adult or think as an adult and that's not always the case."

"Try honey with that, it's so good," Kelly suddenly segues, then explains: "My publicist is here and she put peanut butter and bananas on her bread, and I put peanut butter, bananas and honey on my bread. It's sooo good!"

We're glad to hear she's still got her priorities straight.

A true girlfriend, Rowland says she still sees her Destiny's Child sisters often. "As a matter of fact I've got to call B (Beyonce) tonight just so we can catch up."

Supafest takes place at RNA Showgrounds, Brisbane, on April 17. Details: [www.supafest.com.au](http://www.supafest.com.au)



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