



CHILDGOOD INTERVIEW

THE KEN EROS INTERVIEW



Interview by Josh Greer

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A Award-winning singer and songwriter Red Grammer calls Ken Eros “a first-rate engineer whose talents are enhanced by his imaginative-ness.” And James Lowe of the Electric Prunes says of Ken’s work, “His power in the studio is unmatched! He ALWAYS delivers and is our first-call conduit for recording projects.” We caught up with Ken, producer, engineer, and founding member of the Celtic, World, Trip Hop band Green Man to talk about music, creativity, and family.

CG: You’re a producer, engineer, and musician, among other things, and there must be so much variety in your work, but what do you love most about what you do?

KE: I’d say being exposed to new music and meeting and collaborating with different types of artists. Playing off of one another’s strengths and creativity is inspirational – and great fun! It’s an outlet for personal expression. Of course that depends on my role, which varies from project to project. It’s obviously more creatively satisfying to mix or produce a track from the ground up than cleaning edits or comping vocals from a zillion takes but if you look for the opportunity to be creative, you can find it in doing almost anything.

CG: So the variety itself is a big part of what you enjoy?

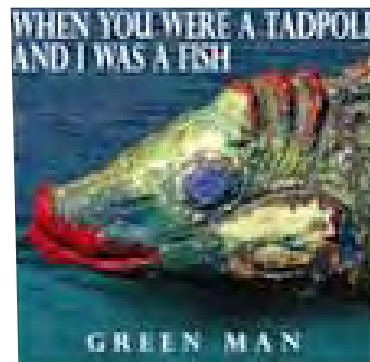
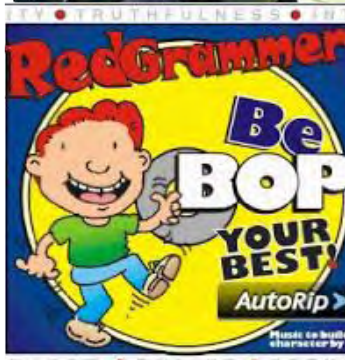
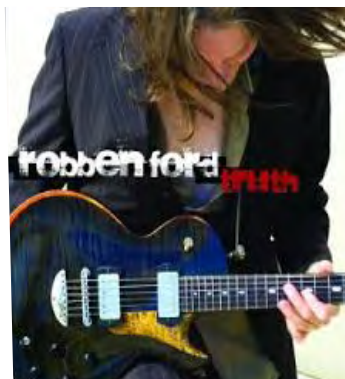
KE: Yeah, you never know what the day is going to bring. Sometimes a session is going one direction then it does a one-eighty and turns into something else. That’s part of the excitement I think.

CG: Is there a moment or a project you would say was a career changer for you?

KE: I think the biggest career changer for me was actually just changing my career. There was a point in my life where I said I’m just going to follow my gut. So I moved out to California in 1992 to do that. That was probably the biggest career changer. I could have stayed on the east coast but decided to drop everything and move out here and give it a shot. That was the biggest moment.

CG: You’ve worked on a number of musical, film, and television projects. Is there a project you’ve been most proud of?

KE: Well, I’m very proud of the Grammy®-nominated albums I participated in: Red Grammer’s *BeBop Your Best!* and Robben Ford’s *Truth*. Those were two really fun projects with unexpected results, so that’s always a treat. Working on the Doors: Live In New York Felt Forum album with Bruce Botnick was a thrill because the work was a challenge and it’s music I grew up with. Same goes for Izzy Stradlin (Guns N’ Roses), Dave Mason and Electric Prunes—suddenly I’m meeting and working with people whose music I’ve admired—fun moments that just happen. Probably one of the most exciting projects I worked on was the final album by goth-rock pioneers Bauhaus called *Go Away White*. It was a two-week creative explosion in every sense of the term. You could feel the electricity in the air. It was very exciting and really magical—great album.



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CG: As a vocalist and multi-instrumentalist, what was the initial spark that got you into music?

KE: We always had music in our house growing up, and I was exposed to lots of different styles. I used to listen to my dad play piano, or my mom sing and play the organ—sit down at her feet with the speaker right in my face while she played that old Wurlitzer—banging on the pedals while she was playing. My brother does a lot of musical theater. I've always loved to sing. That's probably my first love. Stealing my mom's guitar when I was a little kid. I don't know what it was about it. It just drew me in. Growing up I was pretty shy socially, and it was a way to express myself and get my thoughts across. That's what sparked it—and one thing led to another. The mother of invention being necessity, I was like 'Oh, I play guitar and I need some bass on this... well I could probably play the bass', and then finding some cool sounds on a synthesizer and just always coming back to taking a chance on a moment.

CG: You've worked with many talented and successful people, and your work has been incredibly successful as well, but what is your definition of success?

KE: When I was younger, as far as music went, even though I knew it was a difficult industry, to me it was always 'as long as I'm still doing it, I'm still doing it.' That's a relative level of success. But now I would say it's about acknowledging the present moment and being grateful for it—really appreciating what you do and with whom you do it. It doesn't have to be necessarily a creative endeavor—anything—I'm trying to apply that to all aspects of my life.

How to define success—that's a big question. Without sounding too simplistic, it's about finding purpose and joy. As I've gotten older I've found it very rewarding working with kids just coming up—helping them to feel comfortable in a studio setting, and sharing what I've learned along the way.

CG: Even though you're busy as a producer and engineer, your band Green Man also just released its third album. How would you describe it?

KE: *When You Were a Tadpole and I Was a Fish* is the first release of all original material that was written by April Theriault and myself. There is an evolutionary and social commentary theme that runs throughout. It has more of an exploratory slant to it genre-wise. It still has strong trip hop and world influences but the nod to our Celtic roots is pretty subtle on this one.

CG: What's different about producing your own album?

KE: It's harder to be objective and come to an agreement with myself as an artist. Martin Morrissey who was on the first two albums—a great friend and terrific musician—and April and I co-produced all of the things we've done together. So we have to bounce things off each other. It's hard to be that objective person. I always admired those who can do a take and move on without worrying too much about it. The same mistakes, if you will, that I might find charming on someone else's song can make me crazy on my own. But fortunately April and I are pretty ruthless editors with one another's performances.



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CG: Any advice for someone trying to get into the music scene?

KE: Believe in what you have to offer. Be polite. Follow through on your word. Send that email or make a cold call. Because you never know where it might lead. What I've found over time is you spend a lot of time saying 'I don't want to send this off because it's not quite right' or 'I just need this much more experience before I try and get this job or that role.' But a lot of times you come back around and find out that the people doing it have the same level of experience you do. Take a chance. Don't be afraid to fail. It's worse to not take that chance than to get a 'no' and oftentimes you'll get a 'yes' or something that inspires you to keep it going.

CG: You mentioned listening to your mom sing and play and snagging her guitar. Many of our readers are creative people with children. What role did your parents play in your creative journey?

KE: Yeah, my folks were and continue to be great supporters and have always been really behind me whether it's listening to a new song when I was a kid—coming downstairs and interrupting them reading or watching television. Or just coming to see shows. They were always out there cheering me on. They were great like that.

CG: In your work with so many artists, how do you see creative people balancing work and family?

KE: I think it varies from person to person. Some people are on the road for a long time, because they're touring musicians, and coming home and kind of letting that go is difficult—others make the effort to not bring the road home and just enjoy spending time with their family and paying attention. In my case, I'm fortunate that I work with my wife on many studio productions and in Green Man. We are great supporters of one another, so we are able to spend a lot of time together creatively. We run a recording and mixing studio out of our home. It's private and separate, but it's here. Rather than running off and spending a lot of time in other studios, I'm able to do a lot of my work here. It's a great thing to be able to take a break and go out and see the family as opposed to taking a break in the lobby.

CG: I love what you said about not bringing the road home. That makes so much sense.

KE: Yeah, leaving your troubles. Sometimes you project what's coming from somewhere else on the people around you because it's easiest, but it's best not to do that. Take a moment and don't take it out on each other. You're together as a family for a reason.

CG: This issue of ChildGood is geared toward fathers. What challenges do you see creative dads facing today?

KE: Everything is so fast paced and fleeting these days. People are so plugged in—the kids and the parents... their iPhones and texts and all that. Creative or not, fathers need to try to make this moment a priority. Enjoy the time that you have with your kids. Go to the park, see their soccer games, watch a movie, drag them into the studio to hear that new mix. Whatever. Pretty soon they're off doing their own thing and there are no more soccer games.

CG: Enjoy the time you have. We hear that so often, right? Finally, what's the best thing you think a dad can do for his kids?

Be there and listen to them. Really listen. Be patient. And as best you can, teach by example. Sometimes the example is copping to your mistakes and saying 'I'm sorry'. There are so many subtleties to being a parent. I have three great kids who are not mine biologically, but love me as much as any dad could hope for. I've learned a lot about being a father by watching April as a mother. She's incredible with the kids. And their father is an amazing dad. Participate. You don't realize moments that may go by that you think are inconsequential but your kid will remember their whole lives—good or bad. So be aware of what you are doing. Some things that you think are a small moment—going fishing or something—you come back many years later and your kids are like 'I remember that time. It was the greatest thing.'

