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## Viewpoint: Pam Sheyne on moving to America

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Genie In A Bottle composer, Pam Sheyne talks exclusively to Music Week about her move to America two years ago and the differences she faces as a songwriter in LA.

I moved full time to Studio City, L.A. two years ago. I had been travelling back and forth doing regular writing trips with my husband/manager Nigel Rush for about 12 years and we'd been talking about it for so long we finally said OK it's time, if we don't do it now we never will.

I have had most of my success in the States to date and it made sense to give it a go in LA where there is a larger community of writers, producers and artists. There are more opportunities and projects to get involved in and of course the Film and TV industry which I had tapped into on my trips. I'd worked on a few Disney projects whilst living in the UK but it became evident that I needed to be here on a permanent basis to get invited onto projects.

Although I've lived most of my life in the UK and although I'm not originally from there (NZ native) I still think of it as home, but it was getting increasingly difficult as a top line writer to make a decent living. There were fewer albums open to outside songwriters and unless you were part of a production team it was becoming harder to get your songs placed. Being this side of the water additionally makes it easier to go to New York and Nashville and tap into the markets there.

Remarkably no major teething problems as we shipped up our lives and started again. We've been here so many times over the years that LA is our second home so we had a large network of people we worked with and some good friends. My initial observation would be that it is a lot more competitive in America. Whether that's because the stakes are higher as it is a bigger market or because the industry has shrunk over the last few years, it's difficult to tell. There is a larger cross section of people to work with here in a wider variety of music styles as opposed to the UK where the majority of the projects are either band or production team generated or simply self sufficient.

I'd say the main problems facing me are the ones that face all songwriters. The drop in record sales, piracy and lower payments for synchs are making it harder to earn a good living compared to say ten years ago, but you go out and do the best you can and hope that your songs will keep hitting the mark. There are always going to be peaks and troughs in anyone's career, you just have to ride the troughs in hope there is another peak ahead. The important thing is to keep a strong sense of self belief and not let the disappointments get you down. Managing disappointment is an important part of a songwriter's career.

In my experience I think a lot of my success has been about timing and being in the right place at the right time. Being a top liner does allow you to stay current because you're not really identified by a particular track style or sound, you move with what's going on at any given time. Seal recently cut a song that I had written with artist Teitur Lassen for his record four years ago. Seal heard it, loved it and put it on his new record which is to be released September 2010. You never know when the next cut will pop up but when it's an artist of Seal's calibre it's a real treat, one of those career defining moments.

The more you work at anything the better you become. I've always strived for quality rather than quantity and though sometimes it's a bit like taking the long road, I prefer to spend as much time as it needs to get a song right than settle for second best. I specifically like writing with an artist and their producer and handcrafting a song from start to finish. It's great to get into the head of the artist and find out where they are emotionally in their lives so that the song comes from a true place. The trick is then helping them articulate that and making it into something that is unique yet commercial at the same time.

A few weeks ago I worked with Pixie again. We first collaborated about 5 years ago before she was signed and it's been great to see her go on and enjoy major success. What was nice is that she hasn't changed a bit, still the same genuine girl I met five years back. I've also been working with one of Craig Logan's new signings, Tanya Lacey, who has a great voice and presence. Tanya, myself and Jonny Douglas got in a room recently in London and wrote a song together which was fun.

We have finally set up our own studio again and I am working with a couple of writer/producers and looking at finding new artists to develop. It's taken a couple of years to find 'my people' that I connect with here and I am enjoying writing with a smaller bunch of people now. There's nothing better than writing with someone you have great chemistry with and just sitting down and writing a great song on a guitar or piano.

The US market is much more eclectic than most so it does allow you to work in a number of different genres of music which I like. I think coming up with something unique is ultimately what I am aiming at, simply doing re-treads of what's current doesn't excite me much. I like the concept of working with people that you wouldn't normally expect to work together a mix of styles. There are so many artists I'd love to work with but off the top of my head I'd say David Guetta, Neil Finn, Imogen Heap, Labrinth, Linda Perry and Ne-Yo for starters!!!

I think a good song is something that can evoke emotion and touch people. Of course a memorable lyric and a strong melody always helps as does a good concept. I don't think the rules of writing have changed that much even though music is constantly evolving. I think the reason that Ne-Yo, for example, has had big success is because his melodies are classic, simple, yet unforgettable and that reaches the masses. That's what is still so alluring to me about being a songwriter, searching for that elusive idea, concept or melody and trying to come up with a hit. One of my favourite hit songs is "She Will Be Loved" by Maroon 5. It simply ticks every box required..... Just wish I'd written it!



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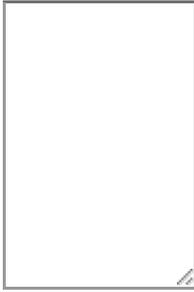
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