



Ashley Lloyd shapes a way of life in Santa Cruz

By Peggy Townsend

When Ashley Lloyd was in her early 20s, she used to hang out in a place called "The Wilderness" in Santa Barbara. It was a ramshackle, horseshoe-shaped house squeezed into the elbow of a freeway onramp and Highway 101, and was usually filled with a collection of surfboard shapers, rough-and-tumble skaters, and hard-core non-conformists. It was there, against a backdrop of blaring punk rock and the rumble of skateboard wheels, that Lloyd spent weeks shaping and glassing her first surfboard.

Today Lloyd is 31 and that board, edged in blue and splotted with brown ding spots, lies in the rafters of her living room just yards from the waters of Pleasure Point. It's been a long road from that first board to her current role as a sought-after shaper. But those who know Lloyd, a woman with eyes the color of glacier ice, say she is more than the rare woman who forges surfboards from blocks

of foam. She is also an accomplished singer/songwriter, a teacher, and a woman who lives by the credo that it's never a bad idea to be kind.

"She's a high minded, Buddha being," said Robin "Zeuf" Janiszewski-Hesson, KPIG (107.5FM) radio's "Girl in the Curl," who befriended Lloyd 16 years ago. "There's nobody quite like her."

Though Lloyd's family home was in the tacky-tacky suburbs of the San Fernando Valley, she was raised on the white sand of Paradise Cove in Malibu. As a young girl, she spent nearly every summer there with her mother and brother, making seaweed skirts, collecting beach rocks, and watching surfers ride the sun-sparkled waves. Later, when her parents divorced, her mother would drop Lloyd and her brother at the beach in the morning before she went to work, and then pick them up at the end of the day. They

spent long hours surfing, their bodies tuned to the rolling swells.

"It was my salvation," Lloyd said of the waves, a place where worries faded and Mother Ocean soothed. "It helped me be in the present moment."

The beach also was where Lloyd discovered music. Sitting at a table at Verve coffee shop on 41st Avenue, Lloyd recalled her first instrument: "My dad had an Ovation guitar, a 12-string, but the dog chewed off some of the tuning knobs, so we turned it into a six-string."

Lloyd often took the remodeled guitar with her to Malibu, where surfers gathered to play music under a ragged palapa, and begged one or two of them to teach her a chord.

(Top) Ashley plays an acoustic guitar while performing in Pleasure Point. (Right) Toes on the nose: Ashley rides a vintage surfboard in last year's "Log Jam".

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(Top) Alex Thompson and Ashley perform at Pleasure Pizza. (Left) While shaping a new surfboard Ashley checks the surface on a foam blank in her shaping room.

"I'd end up writing my own songs because I didn't know a whole song, only chords," she said with a smile.

It wasn't long before she was playing and singing with Denny Aaberg, who co-wrote the film, "Big Wednesday." Janiszeufski-Hesson remembers seeing Lloyd during those years.

"I just watched her surf and was floored by her grace and style, and by her friendliness," she said. "Then I heard her play guitar and said, 'Oh, my God, she can sing like a bird.'"

In true beach style, Lloyd evolved into something of a gypsy. She traveled the world from one surf contest to another, selling her CD, "The Serenata Road Recordings," to finance the trips. But Santa Cruz, where she had recorded her music with the help of Adam Haverstock, kept drawing her back.

"I wanted my soul to be here," she said.

Today Lloyd lives with her boyfriend, musician Alex Thompson, and their cattle dog, Finley, in a rented cottage within earshot of the waves. On a recent rainy morning, she sat in her small living room teasing songs out of her Martin guitar, Thompson's voice weaving with hers as the rain thrummed outside. Lloyd's voice was pure and soulful as she sang of longing, of the strength of love, of uphill struggles. "Beach folk" is what some call her style.



Photo: Nikki Brooks

ASHLEY LLOYD:

Born: June 5, 1980

Favorite saying: "Love before all things."

On her iPod: Norah Jones, Van Morrison, Bonnie Raitt, Head and the Heart.

Surf movie appearances: "Dear and Yonder" and "Women and the Waves," among others.

Web site: www.ashleylloydmusic.com

"What's unique about Ashley's voice is the intention behind it," said Santa Cruz musician Ron Work. "She comes from a real heartfelt perspective. For Ashley, it's all heart all the time."

Lloyd is working on a third CD with plans to tour behind it, as well as teaching surfing ("it fills my soul") and also shaping boards for a growing number of clients.

Her approach to shaping is unique — she asks clients questions about where they surf and the color that comes to mind when they're in the ocean, and also requests they burn a CD of their favorite music so she can "put their energy into the board." But make no mistake about it, she is a practiced craftswoman.

"Her background is her eye," said surf legend Frosty Hesson, the subject of an upcoming feature film about his relationship with the late surfer Jay Moriarity. "At Malibu she got to look at thousands of boards and ride them. She developed her sense of what a surfboard could and should be." She's well on her way to becoming one of the area's notable board shapers, he said.

As the rain slackened, Lloyd put away her guitar. She had a meeting, some shaping, and a little training with her dog who had suddenly begun herding her visitors. ♣