

# News

## Kelly: A Grip on Reality and the Music Business

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lawyer, handled the paperwork.

Since the CBS deal, The Grip Weeds have enjoyed additional success through a licensing agreement with the Eddie Bauer department store chain, which licensed the band's song "Christmas Bring Us," a track that was put on rotation in Eddie Bauer stores throughout this past Christmas season.

Besides playing bass, Kelly also handles some of the group's vocals as well as its marketing.

And like any band, The Grip Weeds have adapted to an ever-changing music world. Kelly explains that the group has built a new business model that includes giving away some music. About one-third of the group's album "Strange Change Machine" was given away digitally. Listeners are drawn to the free music and compelled to buy the rest because it's that good, he says.

The 24-song double album goes through sale cycles, he adds. People listen to the free MP3s for a while, and then sales rise as fans buy CDs, MP3s or even vinyl.

Amid Kelly's overflowing office is yet another instrument: his signature bass.

He designed the four-stringer with Waterstone Musical Instruments LLC, the Tennessee-based company that makes the 12-string bass he plays at shows.

Kelly picked up a Waterstone TP12 bass (the TP stands for Tom Petersson of the band Cheap Trick) on the way to the South by Southwest Music Festival in Austin, Texas.

The bass' fuller 12-string sound was necessary, Kelly says.

In the studio, The Grip Weeds layer multiple guitar tracks, which is more than the band's two guitarists (Rick Reil and Kristen Pinell) can play during a live set. The 12-string TP12 fills in the sound of the missing guitars, Kelly says.

His signature bass will be released this month. It has a jazz-

style neck and a slender, yet hollow body. This design makes for a lightweight bass on a musician's shoulders, he explains.

The term "signature bass" brings to mind a mass production of one person's preferences. Kelly says his signature bass is designed with modification in mind.

The pick guard is shaped in a way that makes changing pickups easier, if the player so desires. The bass will come in the popular guitar shades of black, white, three-tone sunburst and gold. Kelly has christened his sparkling gold prototype "bass ale amber."

In 2006, Kelly relocated from New York to Pennsylvania with his wife and growing family. Regarding his age, he will only say that he first heard music on vinyl.

He began teaching music at the Community College of Philadelphia and later became chair of its music department. He joined the Montco faculty in 2007.

One can't go a semester without hearing students mention Kelly's name with a spirit of admiration and respect. His classes in music technology teach students how to use cutting-edge recording and editing software like Pro Tools.

"It changed everything," says Kelly of the music technology. "Students work on albums in the studio [at Montco]."

Outside of class time, music students have spent hours using Pro Tools and other production equipment to record their work.

While Pro Tools has made recording easier, Kelly says he is wary of allowing a student's ego to inflate.

"The [music] industry still requires a certain level of musicality," says Kelly of the necessity for skill. In his classes, this extends to understanding how to structure a song, as well as play an instrument proficiently, he says. Kelly's students are required to work under a deadline,

write music daily and understand that the music industry is about who you know.

If a student boasts about his or her music, Kelly suggests they perform the song as soon as possible. He organizes the weekly "Music Wednesday" events in the Advanced Technology Center at the Central Campus.

This forum gives his students a place to showcase their material for the student body, and gain performance experience. Music Wednesday has also helped make the ATC building a place for all students to spend their downtime. The event expanded into performances at the Blue Bell Campus' Community Day in October.

Kelly also plays bass for charity. He met surgeon Vincent Scarpinato in 2001 and began playing with The St. Vincent Players. The Players, founded by Scarpinato and Jacqueline Perez,

are a group composed of doctors, nurses and hospital staff.

They perform to raise money for charities like Comic Relief, the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and the Pediatric and Adolescent HIV program at St. Vincent Hospital. His involvement with the Players, like his approach to teaching, is another example of Kelly's down-to-earth perspective.

Like Maya Angelou once wrote: "When you get, give, when you learn, teach."

This belief extends to the way Kelly feels about creating music. He uses his experience in the music industry, as well as outside of it, to give back as a teacher and musician.

"Between the Stones, Led Zeppelin and Motown there is no need for any more music," he says. "The Grip Weeds just love to play music, and we want people to enjoy it."



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