

A Kiss Is Just a Kiss

Katy Perry puckers up

You've come a long way, baby. In 2001 she was a teen contemporary Christian singer named Katy Hudson crooning, "Lord, help me see the reality/ That all I'll ever need is you."

Today she's Katy Perry, the pop princess behind "I Kissed a Girl," a summertime smash that received a Grammy nomination for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance. Last month she graced the cover of *Out* (alongside Portland gay filmmaker Gus Van Sant) for being among last year's 100 most influential people in the queer community.

Jim Radosta: Your gay fans must have a hard time imagining what it was like growing up with two pastors as parents.

Katy Perry: It was probably like their regular, strict parents as well! [Laughs] Sometimes growing up in a family that doesn't quite understand who you are and who you're turning into—I think that is what we both have in common.

I didn't really know anything other than that world. Everything was related to church and going to church and my church friends and my church school. I didn't really realize that: "Shit, the world is not flat. It's actually round." And I found that out when I was 17.

JR: Was your family actively opposed to homosexuality?

KP: They were never the types that would go and picket. They have their beliefs and perspective on lots of different subjects, and I have my roots in my faith, but it's definitely not the picture that they paint. We agree to disagree.

JR: How did you come around to see that they were on the wrong side of that issue?

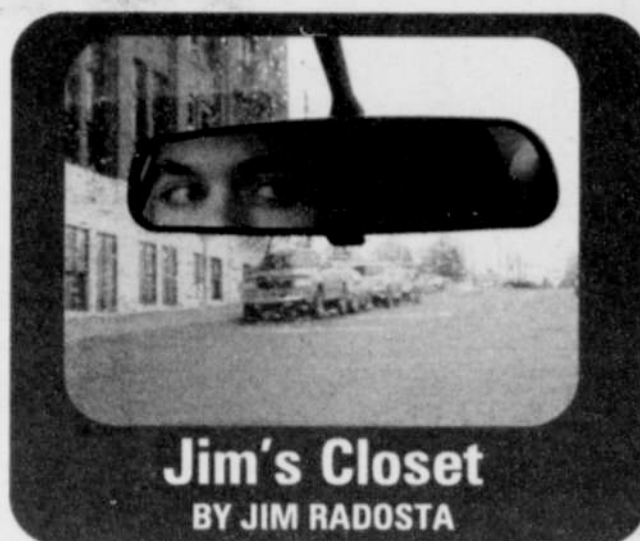
KP: I remember coming to Los Angeles and meeting some really fantastic people and they happened to be gay, and they were really always there for me and encouraging me and we had the best time. There would be that small little thing inside of me from my childhood days like, "These people aren't good for you!"

That's a totally wrong opinion that I was instilled with that has definitely left my body. I was like, "Oh, no, you're a fantastic human being, and you're not going to hell, 'cause if you are, I will hold your hand all the way there."

JR: What was it like when Madonna endorsed "Ur So Gay" during a radio interview? How do you respond when people say the song is homophobic?

KP: It was like the champagne sendoff for my career. It was amazing that the queen of all pop—the woman who, when she speaks, everybody listens—said something about me, another female. Wow!

I think a lot of people who haven't heard the song and just look at the title very easily could be confused and judge a book by its cover.



JR: How did "I Kissed a Girl" come about?

KP: In some ways it was based on a friendship I had when I was younger that was more like an obsessive crush. She was beautiful and had the perfect features of a ballerina. I never kissed her. She was kind of like my ghostwriter/muse for this song, I guess you could say.

But it wasn't really about that one woman in particular. It was just about the idea that beauty sometimes can turn anybody's sexual orientation—it doesn't matter, male or female. Sometimes, for me, there is a woman that walks into the room and you're just like: "Where did this come from? You're perfect."

JR: But you consider yourself straight, right?

KP: Uh, I wear many hats at many different times. But I don't think I could ever handle being in a relationship with another one of me.

JR: How did you feel when that

church in Ohio posted a sign that read, "I kissed a girl and I liked it, then I went to hell?"

KP: I posted a blog response back to it. I basically just wrote back and said, "Come just as you are!"

JR: Did you ever dream that a bi-curious anthem could be No. 1 in America for seven weeks?

KP: Well, I think America just caught up with itself. You know, it's 2009. I think I just said the unspoken. It's not really any secret if you get into a group of girls. It's very normal, and if you ask a lot of people on the street, a lot of girls will give you the same answer I gave them, but I just kind of wrote a song about it, you know? It's one of those things where it's not very taboo anymore, 'cause it never should have been in the first place. **JO**

Alphabeat opens for KATY PERRY 7:30 p.m. Jan. 26 at Crystal Ballroom, 1332 W. Burnside St. Tickets are \$18 from Ticketmaster. She'll also perform at the 51st annual Grammy Awards 8 p.m. Feb. 8 on CBS.

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. E-mail him at jim@justout.com.

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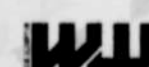
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