Songs From an Aging Sex Bomb

K.T. Oslin

This is a greatest hits package that includes three new songs and one semi-new tune, "New Way Home." That song appeared on her Love in a Small Town album.

The album was never released as a single. They re-released it for this collection with a more pop-oriented song, which is in the pop vein, and will be the direction K.T. will take with her next full album. But most of the songs that made her a phenomenon of the late 1980s are here. Her "80s Ladies" sounding hits "Hold Me," "Do Ya," and "Till Always Come Back". The standout new song is vintage K.T. Oslin called "Feeding a Hungry Heart." K.T. may have always been destined to drift to other musical spectrums. If she does, crossed K.T. Oslin lovers, it's deli-...
K.T. OSLIN

AN AGING SEX BOMB SAYS "SO LONG"

K.T. OSLIN
So Long to an Aging Sex Bomb
Before 1987, every record executive in Nashville would have bet the farm against a 45-year-old female artist making it in country music. All of them, that is, but the one who signed K.T. Oslin to a record contract. Her rise to stardom with hits like “80s Ladies,” “Do It” and “Hold Me” are now modern legend. But in spite of the release of her new greatest hits CD, Songs From an Aging Sex Bomb (See Round Up review this issue), which includes four new songs, K.T. has taken a leave of absence from the music business and may not come back. There are many possible reasons. In the last year and a half, her career slowed down, her mother died, beloved pets passed away, and she said publicly she didn’t like the business side of show business. My talk with K.T. made several things clear. She really had to get away, she will miss the show if she’s not the celebrity, and she will miss the fans who affected her more deeply than she knew. It’s some very candid talk from an “Ageless Sex Bomb.”

You’ve had a pretty good run, and in a lot of ways your career was a miracle. Given the fact that it was tough for a woman of your age and musical style to get in, how could you possibly walk away when you were still pretty viable?

I had to. I had to take a break because I just flat got tired.

You said you were tired, bored and frustrated. Let me take them one at a time. Probably a lot of it is self-explanatory. But what were you tired of?

Well, I was tired of the business of show business. I love the performing end of it; I love the writing end of it; I love all that. But all the other stuff that you have to do in order to do the performing was starting to wear a little thin. I’ve been in the business now for 30 years, and it’s an awful long time of people-pleasing. Am I right for this? Am I tall enough? Am I perky enough? Am I brown-haired enough? Do you like me? Do you like this? Should I do it this way? Should I do it that way? I think it just kind of caught up to me. Especially with the escalated thing that it did for about five years. I’m not real showbiz-struck. I don’t love and adore everything about this business. Most of it I find silly. And the silliness kind of caught up with me. I physically got tired. I mentally got tired.

Give me an example of silliness that made you nuts.

Oh, endless media. Endless, you know, yam-yam. And just, you know, who cares? You’re talking about your boring life forever, and you go, “Well, I’m gonna start telling Roy Roger’s life.” You know? It’s infinitely more interesting than mine. The examination of that. The dog-and-pony show. I started feeling like the dancing bear.

Did you invent any stories that might still be floating out there?

No. I didn’t invent any. No. No.

You were always so forthcoming. In a way, that makes perfect sense to me, that you got tired. Because if somebody asks you a question, you have an answer and you usually have a good one. You don’t just throw out crap.

I don’t gloss it over and say, “Oh, well, everything is just fine, when it’s not. I don’t have a poker face. You know exactly what’s going on with me just by looking at me. If I’m rockin’ and having a good time, it’s there. If I’m not, it’s there. There’s a lot of peripheral things that we don’t find funny as children in this business. We’re basically kids. And we don’t want to always eat our string beans. Well, eat your string beans! And I’m going, “Well, I’ve been eating string beans now till they’re coming out of my ears!” And you start to rebel.

So the tired part is a little more understandable. But some fans out there, who want to do what you do, would love to be up on stage and be glamorous and be on The Tonight Show and things like that, are going to ask themselves, could she say “bored”?

Because they don’t do it. They don’t have any clue as to what it is. The traveling was boring. Ask any traveling salesman what it is to travel. They’ll tell you real fast how boring it gets. It gets boring being in hotel rooms. It gets boring being on the bus. It gets boring not being able to see any of the city that you’re in and realizing that you’ve been there three times now, and you still don’t know anything more about it than you did before. I got bored with having to do the same kind of thing over and over again. I always thought that I was much more inventive than the media, you know. [Laughs] And I got bored with it. What can I tell you? Creative people are very easily bored.

The final thing you said was you got frustrated.

Well you’re bored and frustrated. I think they kind of go hand-in-hand. You’re bored and, well, what do you want to do? Well, gee, I don’t know. I’m frustrated. It’s frustrating always having to worry about your voice, what kind of condition it’s in, trying to get rest, trying to take care of yourself so that you can do your job. It’s a little frustrating to never be in your house that you worked so hard to get and have nice things, and you’re never there. It gets frustrating trying to fit into the mold when you’re not anywhere close to that. That’s what I meant by that.

All right. Now, you’ve come out with a new record. Wasn’t that a signal that you want to get back in this fracas?

Well, not necessarily. It was something that I felt I owed to my record company. It’s not that they said, “Look, you have to do this.” They asked me to do it. They asked me to do a pop project. And I said, well, I’m not up to a whole album. I’m just not up to it. And I can’t tell you when I would be. And Joe [Galante, RCA Records] says, “Well, would you consider doing a Greatest Hits with some new things on it?” I said, yes I would. I feel like I owe Joe Galante a great deal. So I did it, but
No touring at all?

I have no plans on touring. If it looks to where I'll have an extremely hot album or something there might be a very short window that we fill in and do some dates, maybe, maybe not. I just wanted to do this because I was asked to do it.

You had a lot of fans and still do, I'm sure. And I'm sure you get a lot of pressure to get back out there. Especially if you have any kind of hit on this CD. I assume that you might be able to modify your career and not have to do the prototypical country singer, kind of thing, but more on a limited basis.

Yeah, I've never done the typical, country-singer thing and never wanted to. I'm not about to start now. I think country artists tour too much. [Laughs] I think they wear out the horse. So I've never been into that. I'd like to get more into the acting. And I would like to continue writing, if not for myself, for some other people here and there. I don't have to do this business anymore, either for my ego or for money. I've handled my money very well. I live very modestly, and I could quit now and continue to live very comfortably until the big day. After 30 years, everybody retires every now and then. After 30 years, I feel like I have done it.

You mean you felt you'd accomplished something in life?

I don't feel any frustration. Well, gee, I never won a Grammy. I've won three Grammys. Gee, I never won a CMA. I won a CMA. I've won a lot of things. I've proven a lot of things both to myself and to the public, I don't feel the drive to keep on and keep on. I have no intention of wanting to have an empire. I'm not very greedy when it comes to money. And I want to enjoy my life very much. I've spent 30 years really on the edge. And I'm tired of it. [Laughter] I'm tired of it! And I'm tired of you! [Laughter] No, I mean, I have to be very honest. Ask anybody who's done the same job for 30 years. Are they tired of it? You bet! Some of it, you are. And especially this. This is an unusual, odd business.

It sounds like to me, you're still in a deciding stage about what you're going to do with yourself.

Very definitely. Very definitely.

I think you have a large mass appeal. Is the pop-music project something that you're still thinking about?

Possibly. Like I said, if I feel like doing this, I will.

What about the whole star trip?

And you are about to ask. "Well, are you gonna miss the ego stroking? Are you gonna miss all the stuff?" You think, Hmmm, there is much to be said for that. But, like I said, I have achieved an awful lot. I've proven some things to myself that I do not have the itch to prove anymore. And now I want to groove. I do not want to have to worry about having laryngitis. I don't want to worry about, Oh gosh, am I looking old? Am I getting fat? Do they like this? Do they like that? Quite frankly, I'm tired of being a people-pleaser. If they like me, fine. If they don't, then go somewhere else. Don't play in my yard then, if you don't like it. I am no longer going, well, I'll change your yard. Do you like it better in the front yard or the back yard? I'll put new grass in. I'm not going to do it anymore.

There's a side of me that's very happy for you to have reached that place and is happy. But there's also a side to me that's a fan of K.T. Oslin, that says, "Don't do it!"

You can only do it as long as you enjoy it. If you're just going to do it for the money, you're in the wrong business. And I have done it to the point where I'm having a good time. I had a lot of fun doing this album, but it was not a full album. And here I am on the phone and running from here and running from there. And I'm going, aye, yaye, yaye.

Some people speculated you suffered a writer's block and that slowed you down?

I don't have any writer's block. I simply don't try to do it every day or every week or every month even. I do it when I really feel like doing it, and when I feel like I have something a little special to say. I'm not in the business as just a writer. I'm not trying to turn it out that way. So I do it when I want to do it. Basically, I'm just sort of trying to spend the roses now. [Laughs] For a long time I was so driven and I was so poor and I was so unaccomplished that it was all I could do. And now I realize that there's a lot of nice things in life, but you need to take a little time to do them.

Good point. With your writing, you express so much of what is in a woman's heart. The timing made you important to the ladies of the '80s. What about a '90s lady? How are they different?

You know, I don't know. It's only '93. I don't know what the deal is. I sometimes feel like we've come a long, long way and that the doors are opening, and then the next day I think the only thing we have achieved is the right to take off more clothes in order to get the gig. Yes! Now you can show your whole ass on the screen in order to be a video babe! And I go, wonderful, great. What if I don't show my ass—do I get the job? Well, no, there's a person that will. I go, hmmm, interesting, we've really achieved a lot. I don't know. I think everybody's going to soften up a little bit. I think men and women are finally starting to kind of work in tandem a little more. I haven't made the study of it yet. I've kind of been taking care of myself and trying to see. But I see a softening. You can see it in fashions. We're no longer striding into the room with our giant shoulder pads and our severe suits with our briefcases, trying to contend with the guys. We realize now that we can be feminine. We can be soft. We can do it in a feminine way and still get the job done. We don't have to imitate the men anymore. We can be women and do it our way. I think it's going to be a lot more team work between men and women. That's really good. And, hopefully, we will get more and more power in this business. Gen-

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uine power and not just lip-service power.

That's still to come.

Big time. Big time.

The old “glass ceiling” they call it. So you've been kind of observing one woman mostly, right now. But I can see you have one eye cocked to CNN.

I spent a year watching the “weep-and-tell” shows. [Laughs] Watched them all everyday. I'm infinitely interested in what makes people tick. Weep-and-tell shows. Sally Jesse, Oprah, all the shows. And I see how we go socially. I see what we can talk about now. I see how much more we communicate than we used to. All of that is good. But are we communicating the right thing? I see how a whole generation, namely, my generation, as parents tried to be friends with their kids and as a result they kind of lost control. Got to be the parent. Can't be the friend all the time. And I see more and more of that coming. I see us all being a little worried about what our future is, what the planet is into. I think we're going to start trying to take better care of our planet. We have to all be good citizens here on this planet. And it's very important. All that awareness of something other than just ourselves is creeping in. And it's going to make us really a lot better. But it'll take time.

It's an interesting time for you. I'm really glad you're having this time to be reflective and there are plenty of people who hope you do keep writing, because you have a very unique perspective. I've always wondered if you fully appreciate how unique it is and how to the heart of the matter it is.

I do. Sometimes I put myself on the back for it. And sometimes I go, why are you doing it this way? Everybody else is taking the easy way out, and you're swimming upstream all alone! But it's just the way I do things. It's just the way it is, and it will always be. I have to keep myself interested in it as well, and I have to dig a little deeper to keep myself interested.

Let's talk a little bit about the record

“Sometimes I feel like women have come a long way, and then the next day I think the only thing we’ve achieved is the right to take off more clothes in order to get the gig.”

that you put together. The illustrations were wonderful. I assume that’s your #castle depicted in the album cover painting. Are those your things?

Some of them are. That’s Vinny-Boo-Boo, my doggie. He’s my poor, old, passed-away doggie. My cat, Gladys, is curled up on the chair; she passed away last year. The panda bear on the bed is my panda bear that I got for my third Christmas; I've still got it. One of the
little lamps is mine. There’s a few touches that are actually in my house. The little car that you see peeping out is a little car that I have at home. And then there are different things from the videos. The Frankenstein thing.

Explain the title of the CD, Songs From an Aging Sex Bomb?

My idea. My title. I said, “Do we have to call it Greatest Hits?” He said, “No, what would you like to call it?” I said, “Songs From an Aging Sex Bomb.” It just popped out of my head, totally off the cuff. I had not agonized over it for days. It just popped out. Galante looked at me and says, “Are you sure?” I said, “Yes. It’s fun.”

Are you an aging sex bomb?

Definitely! [Laughing] I have a birthday coming up here. It’s starting to be too many! [Whew!]

I always thought you were a very sexy woman, and so I thought the title worked just great.

Well, great. Yeah, I’ve been referred to as very sexy. I look in the mirror and I go, I am? And I don’t get it. So it was sort of a tongue-in-cheek play on the sex bomb. I thought my fans would appreciate it.

You’ve never married, and at one point told me you’re not likely to. Why?

It’s just that I don’t think I’m equipped to do it. I think you have to be fairly well-adjusted and together with yourself, or you keep making the same mistakes over and over again. It takes two people to make a relationship, and it takes two of them to make it not work as well. And I think it’s always about half and half in most cases. I’m still looking. [Laughs] And certainly if I thought it was the right thing, I would do it in a heartbeat. But I haven’t found it.

So you’re still free and free to be a sex bomb, if you will?

That’s right.

The first single was actually a song

that was on one of your other albums.

Yes. It’s a remake of it. We completely recut it. I thought it was a hit and I wanted them to release it the first time and they didn’t. And so I asked to recut it and they agreed and especially in a pop vein, and so we recut “A New Way Home.”

The new music is different but it seems to fit the other stuff.

Yes, I was worried about that. I thought, Oh man, there’s going to be a giant theme between the old and the new. It’s going to make the old stuff sound kind of hokey and whatever. But in my opinion, and I am very critical, is the new stuff, being pop, brought out the pop characteristics in the old stuff. There’s a couple of the greatest hits on there that sound like they could have been recorded yesterday. There’s a couple on there that I think sound dated. There’s a couple on there that I didn’t like from the beginning, the way we did them. But whatever, they’re still on there. Basically, I think the old and the new do go together very well on this album.

Of the other songs on this record, your past hits, what’s your favorite or the most meaningful one?

It was a toss up between a few of them. I’m very fond of, “Hold Me.” I’m very fond of, of course, of “80s Lady.” I think it was written very well.

Very well and one of the best videos ever.

It introduced a style of video that now everyone is doing. It looks rather hokey and hackneyed now, but when you look at that video, I mean, that was great. And I also like, just for pure music’s sake, “Come Back.” That’s also a record, I think, sounds very contemporary. I think it sounds like it could have been recorded yesterday.

What do you say to the fans that are going to miss you? What do you want them to understand the most?

It’s very sweet to think that you would be missed. I gave them my very best. I’m trying to live my life to make me happy, not everybody else. Because in the long run, me is the only one that counts, really. And if they miss me, then that makes me happy, but at least I gave them something. [Laughs] Didn’t go away empty-handed.

Do you miss the fans?

I sat down all day yesterday answering some fan mail. I had gotten to the point where I couldn’t even deal with that. I felt like I was being torn apart by people. I read the fan mail—I don’t have someone ghost signing; I don’t have someone mailing it out and reading—I read that stuff. And it’s very draining. Because people are very profound. People’s lives are very sad sometimes. People’s lives are tragic. And I feel very much. And yesterday, after doing it for about four hours straight, I felt like I had been drug behind a truck. Reading people’s lives and thoughts and how you have entered their lives and how affecting you have been, I feel that very much. It’s not an easy thing to go through. And that’s hard to explain to people.

Can you give me an example?

I had a letter from a guy, and he was saying that he liked my singing very much and that about three years ago they had an “80s Ladies” and “This Woman” tape and they were taking a long drive from somewhere to Chicago and back with their son who was 10 years old and not into country music. The letter said, “We listened to your tapes many times during the trip, and by the time we were starting to come home, he knew every word of every song. And he was pleased about that.” And then it said, “But tragically, this year at age 13, he drowned. And I miss him very much. He was not only my son but he was my good, good buddy.” It said, “I have a trunk of things of his that I have put aside, and every now and then, when I’m alone, I will go through them. And yes, I do cry, but it’s a good cry because I feel close to him when I’m doing this, and I would like to have an autographed picture to him from you to add to that collection of things.” And I thought, Oh! I mean, I felt my heart break. To think that I entered their lives enough that they
would want me to be a part of that, was incredible. And I thought, How could I ever give that up? But you can only do what you do. I was just deeply touched by it, and I was also drained by it. People don’t understand.

It’s a heavy responsibility.

Yes, it is. Terrifying.

But, also, fans take you on as friends. If they are your friends and you said, “I’m hurting,” they would say, “Stop doing what makes you hurt.”

Absolutely, I have a few people that called themselves The Diehards. And they have networked with each other, and they keep in touch. And they’ve all sent letters saying, “We’re worried about you; we have dreams about you; you look great, but something is wrong.” And indeed, they’re right, they were right. And I thought, Well, isn’t that wonderful. They said, “But no matter what you did or don’t do, we will always be fans and we will always understand whatever it is that you choose to do.”

And you go, Well, those are friends. Those are very dear friends, and it happened because of a little cassette. That’s very touching, but it’s also frightening to be that close to strangers. People don’t understand, as a celebrity or as a famous person, being approached by total strangers everywhere you go. From out of the blue. A total stranger who may know a great deal about you. And you know nothing about them. You know absolutely nothing. And they know where you were born. They know how old you are. They know all kinds of stuff. You feel a little bombarded and you can feel kind of attacked, you know. You’re going, Gee, all these strangers! It’s not like you know these people, and they’re coming up to say hello. They’re total strangers. They’re coming when you’re unaware, and they’re coming when you are aware. And that can get a little rough. It can get a little strange.

You have obviously survived it. And you sound wonderful and in a very good place, even though your decision will be tough on your fans.

It was not an easy year, and I did have to kind of do it that way. But I came through it, as we all know we can. And it’s just one more of those things that you prove, Well, yes, I am a survivor and I can do this. So that’s good.

“Summing up, you are out of the country music business for now. You are semi-retired and may be retired forever, or you might do at least one more album and it will likely be pop, is that about it?”

If tomorrow I wake up and I say, “I really don’t want to do this anymore,” I have the option to do it or not to do it.

It’s a lovely place. Not very many people can say that.

You must feel a wonderful sense of freedom.

I do. But Loretta Lynn said something very profound. She said, “You know, it’s easier to get into this business than it is to get out of it.”

We wish you the best of luck no matter what you decide.

Thanks.