**CASSANDRA LEWIS**

***LOST IN A DREAM* BIO**

Cassandra Lewis knows how to tell a story. She could go into detail about a childhood in constant motion, moving in a montage from Germany through Florida, Texas, and, eventually, Idaho among her family of “*high mountain desert folk*.” She shares memories of escaping loneliness and insecurity in front of the television set or tasting her first bit of fanfare as “*a little yodeling cowgirl*” at the town’s lone Walmart or retirement homes. There were moments of houselessness, working in countless restaurants, sleeping in a shared tent at a refugee camp, and selling joints “*out of the back of a Subaru*” that she lived out of with her rescue dog and cat after a wildfire burned down her farm in Mendocino. She found community and psychedelics in the Bay Area. If it wasn’t for psilocybin and psychedelic medicine, she might have succumbed to the pitfalls of life instead of moving forward and using her pain to heal and forgive. She says she holds a deep gratitude for these dualities. “*You can’t appreciate the light without living and breathing the dark.*”

She inhaled inspiration from cut-and-dry classic country and rock ‘n’ roll, smoked-out soulful psychedelia, and exhaled a shadowy signature sound—easily likened to a fever dream between Marty Robbins and Joni Mitchell. This is a new kind of Americana. She slung her songs for anyone who would listen, pressing to remain independent unless she scored a deal with Low Country Sound/Elektra Records. For Cassandra, it was either Dave Cobb and the legacy label, or continuing to create with her musical community. Both a privilege and a gift.

Now, she’s taking this foundation and paving her own yellow brick road on her 2024 full-length debut LP, *Lost In a Dream.* “*The storytelling is heavy, but it’s relatable*,” she observes. “*I’m using different colors. I love big seventies balladeers, I dig grunge and jazz. I grew up in and ON cowboy country so I relate to classic western storytelling. I want it to feel raw and visceral, so it hits people the way my favorite music hits me. I don’t think we should feel comfortable all the time. I want my music to make people feel human - laugh, cry, scream, fucking feel it all.*”

Her dad served in the U.S. Army, so Cassandra was actually born on a converted WWII base in Nuremberg. Following a couple years in Germany, she and her parents settled back in the States. By the time she turned four, her parents had divorced. Life didn’t get easier. “*My mother remarried a complicated, emotionally charged man who just couldn’t heal his hurt, but he “processed*” *by listening to music.*” They moved mostly out of necessity and a desire to overcome the struggles of being young parents of four. Cassandra helped raise her three siblings while her mom and step dad worked multiple jobs to keep them all afloat. They didn’t have a lot of money so the family did the best with what they had. Thrifting and frugality taught her to be scrappy and inventive, but she never lost the certainty that music was her path to her family’s freedom and security. “*Three years was the longest I lived in one place*,” she notes. That was in Rigby, Idaho where her Samoan vocal teacher, Dee spotted Cassandra at a talent show and experienced an epiphany. Cassandra goes on, “*She was like, ‘I’m supposed to teach you, spirit told me’, and she blew my voice open.*”

At 8 or 9, the budding talent would book herself shows by flipping through the phone book, performing five or six days in a row, anywhere and everywhere with a stage and even earning enough money to help her mom out. At 15, she was burnt out and tired of music being the only value she held. “*I wanted everyone to stop asking me to sing at things and just wanted to be a human. I just wanted to be loved.*” she recalls.

After she experienced a taste of independence and extreme bullying by students, teachers and religious members in her community, she decided to move in with her grandparents and go to a bigger school a few hours away in Idaho Falls. Eventually graduating and taking her chances on a new life in Big Sur, and a journey up and down the whole western United States. “*That’s the first part of the story.*”

Along the way, she devoured records by everyone from Elvis Presley and Patsy Cline to Shania Twain, Maria Carey, and LeAnn Rimes to Pearl Jam and Nirvana. Still, she did everything but music for a while. “*I resisted it as a job for most of my twenties*,” she affirms. “*I wasn’t trying to do music, because everyone said I needed a fallback plan, nobody ever makes it, and I’m just not good enough. When enough people tell you that you’ll never make it, you tend to start believing them.*”

Life twisted and turned, as it always did for Cassandra. On this road, she cut a five-song EP sitting on the edge of a bathtub in a little cabin on her cannabis farm. With a bottle of Wild Turkey and the help of a persistent producer, Eric Oberthaler, she performed the raw and freshly crafted songs that would eventually become fully fleshed out tracks for her debut album. But not before the fire would take her farm down and send her on a long, strange trip to San Francisco. She played shows and saved money by busking and performing at “*renegade parties and burner parties.*” Simultaneously, the songstress built up a network and even spent some time living “*in a weird crypto mansion owned by the guy who invented the ‘like’ button on Facebook*,” helping remodel and design the property alongside her father and some incredible installation artists.

Raising enough dough through hard labor and the kindness of good community, she properly recorded and released her independent debut, *Always, All Ways* in 2022. “Darlin’” tipped the scales with half-a-million streams and stirred up a bit of buzz. In the midst of this whirlwind, she wound up in an impromptu meeting with Elektra Records President Gregg Nadel, performing for him in the parking garage of the label’s office and winding up with a deal. “*We kind of ambushed him*,” she laughs. “*The acoustics were better than out on the street.*”

9x-GRAMMY® Award-winning producer Dave Cobb [Brandi Carlile, Chris Stapleton, Jason Isbell, Sturgill Simpson] fell in love with the music and invited her to the studio. Together, they brought *Lost In a Dream* to life. On “Emerald City” soft and sultry sway evokes fifties crooners spiked with a shot of whiskey. On “Some Kind of Love,” her quivering intonation melts into dreamy guitar accented by delicate strings. A slow simmer barely contains the soulful exorcisms of her delivery on “Hold The Door” as she confesses, “*I spent far too many years shackled to this anger and my fears.*” Piano twinkles beneath haunting vocals on “So Bad” as she bemoans, “*But I loved your shadow then, and I love your shadow now, but I can’t pretend it doesn’t hurt me when you lay another down.*” Finally, the dusty, steel slide heavy closer, “I Would” eulogizes an old friend lost to an accidental drug overdose, but harkens the closure of something toxic with a wishful nod to trading places if only for a day, just to see the beauty of life again.

“*The album’s overarching theme describes my relationship with a guy who was essentially like The Wizard of Oz*,” she says. “*I pepper in modern elements of addiction, alcoholism, emotional abuse, and mental health struggles. I’m essentially Dorothy in blissful ignorance. I dream of something bigger, and I put him not only on a pedestal, but I built an emerald city around the idea of him. He let me believe that he was worthy of it, and helped me to believe I was unworthy. I felt like the Tin Man, the Scarecrow, the damn Cowardly Lion going through all of this shit to get my pieces back together and be good enough for someone so grand. It was like pushing through an opium-like haze of the deep love we shared and being tossed around emotionally until I couldn’t tell what was real or not. I get through it at the end though, with a triumphant understanding that he is simply just another hurting human, and I gave him the power to control my life. I was always the home I was seeking in him.*”

It’s a hell of a love story, and it’s real to me.

“*If you listen to my work, I hope you realize it’s okay to fuck up and feel like shit*,” she leaves off. “*There are lessons in all of this. I’m learning who I am too. For now, I’m like your weird auntie who can teach you how to change your oil and show you the world through my own lens. My truth.*”

**BOILER**

Cassandra Lewis knows how to tell a story. She could go into detail about a childhood in constant motion, moving in a montage from Germany through Florida, Texas, and, eventually, Idaho among her family of “*high mountain desert folk*.” She shares memories of escaping loneliness and insecurity in front of the television set or tasting her first bit of fanfare as “*a little yodeling cowgirl*” at the town’s lone Walmart or retirement homes. There were moments of houselessness, working in countless restaurants, sleeping in a shared tent at a refugee camp, and selling joints “*out of the back of a Subaru*” that she lived out of with her rescue dog and cat after a wildfire burned down her farm in Mendocino. She found community in the Bay Area and if not for the integration of psilocybin and psychedelic medicine, she may have succumbed to the pitfalls of life instead of moving forward and using her pain to heal and forgive. She says she holds a deep gratitude for these dualities. “*You can’t appreciate the light without living and breathing the dark.*” She inhaled inspiration from cut-and-dry classic country and rock ‘n’ roll, smoked-out soulful psychedelia, and exhaled a shadowy signature sound—easily likened to a fever dream between Marty Robbins and Joni Mitchell. This is a new kind of cosmic Americana. She slung her songs for anyone who would listen only for a proverbial “last shot” to pay off by landing a deal with Low Country Sound/Elektra Records circa the Pandemic. Now, she’s taking this foundation and paving her own yellow brick road on her 2024 full-length album, *Lost in a Dream*.