

# KACEY CUBERO

## The Indie Artist Serves Her Gift

BY **ANDREW FISH** PHOTOGRAPHY **JEFFREY FITERMAN** HAIR/MAKEUP **LUCY CRAWFORD/NARS**

**S**oulful, soft, plaintive, rebellious, rough around the edges, and just plain rockin', Kacey Cubero's new album, *Fill Your Cup*, smoothly nestles the singer-songwriter into the fabric of Americana. She's toured tirelessly in the U.S. and abroad, including a stint in Japan to support the troops. A self-made powerhouse, Cubero first took the stage as a child, in a rather unconventional environment. "Actually, I would sing in bars," she recalls. "Kids could go in bars back then. My father was kind of a hustler, and he took me. If I knew the song, I would get up and sing whatever the band was playing. I'd be there all night long and fall asleep in a booth. It wasn't the best of times, to be honest, but it was something different and it definitely fueled whatever fire I already had in me."

Cubero got her first guitar as a birthday present when she was around 10, and figured it out from there. "I was kind of a latch-key kid. My parents were divorced and my mom was at work, so I spent a lot of time alone and music kept me company," she explains. "Over time I've learned a lot from the people I've played with — but when I was growing up, I got a book, locked myself in my room, and kind of figured it out."

After earning her degree in business and finance in her hometown of Washington, D.C., she took off for Los Angeles with her guitar and a suitcase. With no connections in the industry, Cubero quickly made herself known as a go-to musician in the local scene. The emotive power of her nuanced vocals, her impressive skills as a songwriter, and the tenacity to back them up, were rewarded when Jackson Browne took notice, and spent a brief time mentoring her in her songwriting. "I remember being excited to actually share the *concept* of writing with him. What a gift — like, 'Wow!' — to get to have that moment. I always felt inspired after our time together, and it taught me to try to be encouraging to everyone else. It was one of those small stones that the universe gives you, like it's saying, 'You're pretty cool. You're on the right track. You're where you're supposed to be!'"

Writing and producing *Fill Your Cup*, as well as booking her own dates and wearing every hat required to keep it all on track, this true indie artist enjoys the exhausting privilege. "I've been doing my own thing and leading my own way," she smiles. "Strangely, that has been the most rewarding thing so far in my whole career. Making my own decisions and not doing what people might think I'm supposed to be doing, but rather what I'm gravitating towards. Going with your gut. Your intuition serves you much better than trying to do what Music Business 101 is telling you to do."

The new record, with its beautifully resonating yet conflicted narrative on the meaning and flow of relationships, is picking up speed. She's already won the MAVRIC Independent Music Award for Folk Song of the Year for "Feather in the Wind," and she's touring Southern California this summer, including a gig at the Johnny Cash Music Festival, and the U.K. this fall.

Named 2006 Artist of the Year by the Santa Barbara Blues Society, and twice named Indie Artist of the Year by Singer Magazine, Cubero is simply grateful for the opportunity to provide. "If I can offer that same thing to the listener that I get from the people that I like to listen to," she expresses, "then I'm serving my gift. And what a blessing when you know that you're successfully doing that. You know you're in the right place." ▼

*Kacey Cubero and her band, which includes Josh Davis, Bill Flores, Jim Rankin, Pete Gallagher, and Atma Anur, perform at the Mint on May 4th. To purchase Fill Your Cup or her previous album, Diamond in the Rough, visit [www.kacey-cubero.com](http://www.kacey-cubero.com).*

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