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Letters to Cleo's Kay Hanley chats about the group's upcoming Chicago reunion at ROOFLIVE

Posted in [Clubs](#), [Music](#) by [Zach Long](#) on June 23rd, 2010 at 11:00 am



Letters to Cleo, Photo: Justine Ungaro Photography

If you were listening to pop radio in the early '90s, you probably heard Letters to Cleo's hit single "Here & Now." It was the kind of undeniably catchy pop-rock tune that was likely on many a high-school mix-tape; the track's video even had the honor of being ridiculed by [Beavis and Butt-Head](#). Recently, we had a chance to chat with the (Boston-accent-laden) voice behind that song, singer Kay Hanley. She and the rest of Letters to Cleo are reuniting for a one-off show on the rooftop of the Wit Hotel here in Chicago on Thursday, June 24—the live-music series at the hotel is dubbed ROOFLIVE. You can find more info on tickets over at [theWit](#).

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So, as a Boston native, are you still recovering from the Celtics NBA Finals loss?

You know, I'm from Boston and I'm a dyed-in-the-wool Red Sox fan so I'm used to losing. I always expect to lose. I mean, it was a bummer just because the refs should have gone to fucking prison for the way they called half the game, like Kobe's made of fucking glass or whatever. But I'm not bitter, not at all [*Laughs*].

While we're on the topic of your hometown, do you ever run into your childhood neighbors the Wahlbergs?

I haven't seen them recently, but I saw Donnie a couple of years ago and we hung out. I was rehearsing next door to New Kids on the Block, so me and Donnie would go out and have smoke breaks together. So yeah, I mean, we were really close growing up but obviously they were just the regular Wahlbergs then, they weren't the famous Wahlbergs.

Let's talk music a little bit; since your band Letters to Cleo split in 2000 you've written quite a few songs for children's shows (*My Friends Tigger and Pooh*, *Care Bears*). What's the attraction of writing songs for kids?

Well, I think even with Letters to Cleo, the way I write songs; it's pretty sing-song-y and my sense of melody really lends itself to kids' music. It's nothing that I ever really thought out; opportunities just came my way, especially after the band was splitting up and we weren't making money from being on the road. I want to take whatever work is going to pay the bills and if I can continue to write songs I don't really care what it is. It's what makes me happy, that's what I do, and I appreciate the challenge, whether it's children's music, or writing for an artist, or doing composing for a TV show. I'm unemployable in any other medium but the music business at this point, so I take the jobs that come to me and generally I really enjoy doing it.

Speaking of those other jobs, I know you recently toured with Miley Cyrus as a backup singer. Was that experience a little bit different than going on the road with Letters to Cleo?

Slightly [*Laughs*]. Stacey Jones, Letters to Cleo's drummer, is Miley's music director, so that's how I got that gig. I'm not really a backup singer, and I don't mean that as though it's beneath me, I love doing it! It was one of the most fun experiences I've ever had. I really enjoyed every minute of it. But yeah, it was totally different; on that tour there were 15 tour buses, 14 semi trucks. It was like a machine, it was crazy!

You're going to be playing a rooftop show here in Chicago with Letters to Cleo. Do you guys have any special plans while you're here?

Well, we're stoked to play on a rooftop in Chicago! I love Chicago, our roots in Chicago go way, way back. You know, we toured with Fig Dish, I'm a huge Triple Fast Action fan, and Nina Gordon from Veruca Salt is one of my best friends. We met all those guys traveling through Chicago on tour, so I'm just really psyched to get back to Chicago. We're flying in early, I think we're catching a Cubs game; we're only going to be there for a day, so I just want to pack it all in.

Tags: [Kay Hanley](#), [Letters to Cleo](#), [ROOF](#), [ROOFLIVE](#), [theWit Hotel](#)



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