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Walking the 'Line' with Kimberly M'Carver

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Anyone who has ever experienced the country folk of Houston singer-songwriter Kimberly M'Carver knows that she believes in symbolism. For her, train whistles are synonymous with loneliness, and a city like Santa Fe drowns with spirituality.

It's no surprise, then, that parting with the truck that's transported her from one gig to the next for the past decade was more than just a vehicle trade-in. It was more like a funeral for a friend.

"There's been a lot of livin' in that truck," says M'Carver, who arrived for coffee in Montrose in husband Jim's gas-guzzling monster pickup. "When we sold it, I was out there taking pictures with the new owner. It was like saying goodbye to one of my children or a pet."

Sounds like the beginnings of a new M'Carver ditty.

On the cover of her latest album, *Cross the Danger Line*, she has stunning long hair the color of a red fox and green eyes. In person her stare is even more penetrating.

M'Carver has a way of making a first-time listener feel like a college buddy or childhood friend. Just like in her songs,

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- [Death and Texas](#)
- [Santa Fe](#)
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DETAILS

Kimberly M'Carver will perform at 8 p.m. Friday at Anderson Fair, 2007 Grant. Tickets are \$8. Call 713-528-8576 for more information.

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she's quick to open up.

After years of apartment living in Montrose and League City, she and Jim are trying to move into a house ... a move that's scheduled just four days before Christmas.



Singer-songwriter Kimberly M'Carver seems to be busier than ever as she plans to move into a new home just four days before Christmas and works to promote a new album, *Cross the Danger Line*.

"We probably won't bother with a tree or decorations this year," says M'Carver, who also shares her home with three dogs. "I'll probably be painting the bathroom on Christmas Day."

As she laughs and sips decaf, one realizes how thin the line is between stardom and the search for it. A listen to *Cross the Danger Line* makes one wonder why some promoter hasn't helped her cross it.

Since 1989 M'Carver has been sharing her

talent with Houston, Nashville and other country-music hotbeds via the stories she tells in her songs. Along the way she's found many of the necessary showbiz tools -- charm, a disciplined voice, all-star musicians to back her and a love of performing.

Her show on Friday at Anderson Fair will be the first of six shows M'Carver is scheduled to play in Houston through May; she comes back to play the Mucky Duck on Jan. 3.

Surrounding those dates are gigs in Cambridge, Mass.; Springfield, Ill.; and Ann Arbor, Mich. -- not to mention a trip to Nashville every six weeks or so, just to make sure Music City is listening.

No wonder Christmas is the only time available to paint the bathroom.

Combining a mix of Nanci Griffith country-folk modernism and Loretta Lynn blue-collar strength, M'Carver has forged a collection of songs and performances that most country artists would love to call their own.

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Her backing musicians include bassist Viktor Krauss, an elite country sideman for sister Alison as well as Lyle Lovett and Bill Frisell. James Gilmer has added percussion for Lovett, Eric Taylor and Denice Franke.

Rounding out her core band are guitarist and co-producer Scott Neubert (Trace Adkins, Hal Ketchum), mandolin player Brent Truitt (Riders in the Sky) and fiddle player Aubrie Haynie (George Jones, Brooks & Dunn).

"It's not like I just call all these guys and ask them to play with me," explains M'Carver of this all-star Nashville session team. "Everybody talks to everybody, and many of these guys are accustomed to playing together."

Truitt's fluttering mandolin harmony helps M'Carver and guest vocalist Jim Lauderdale make *Death and Texas* the type of tongue-in-cheek country Emmylou Harris might indulge in.

Folky *Santa Fe* finds M'Carver warbling the Southwest's praises with the same affection John Denver once offered in a *Rocky Mountain High*. Her voice might work best interpreting melancholy, as on the wanderlust of *When I Hear Trains*, or the social weariness of *Fix 'n Paint*.

Her seven original songs on *Cross the Danger Line* are woven around three covers. Flower-petal soft pushes of air waft over Latin-tinged guitar on a Marty Robbins-inspired *Return to Me*, and the Celtic-to-country evolution on Greg Troopers' *Ireland* can only be described as feminine.

Local music fans will especially appreciate an acoustic cover of Townes Van Zandt's *Niles River Blues*, the song M'Carver chose to perform at a Houston tribute to the revered singer-songwriter following his death in 1997. This recorded version is doubly precious because it features one of the final performances by Houston mandolin player Dave Peters, who died two years ago.

"He was a true musician," M'Carver says of Peters. "Some players don't spend a lot of time practicing, but Dave was always calling and saying, 'When are we going to play?' (His death) was really a shame."

Short of any of her recordings becoming hits, a close second option for M'Carver would be having a well-known country artist or two picking up her songs. The Grammy-winning duo the Kendalls recorded the song *Serious Doubt* from her 1989 debut album, *Breathe the*

Moonlight, before Royce Kendall's death three years ago.

It has still not been released, but M'Carver remains hopeful. She even has a couple of others picked out for other artists, including Harris, Garth Brooks, Trisha Yearwood and Steve Tyler of Aerosmith.

"I think *Midnight Angel* would be perfect for him," M'Carver says of the track she's picked for Tyler from 1994's *Inherited Road*. "It would be great to hear someday."

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