

# GODDESS OF CONTRASTS

## No stranger to the stage,

Aziza Poggi has a varied performing past. In her earlier years as an actress, she played character roles in a number of indie productions. In 2003, she landed the lead in "Broken", the award-winning sex, art and drugs film directed by Derek Justice and David DeLeon. Shortly after filming "Broken", Poggi returned to her first love, music, and formed Dendura, the Egyptian-themed progressive metal band. [www.dendura.com](http://www.dendura.com)

Dendura is a culmination of Poggi's interests as a child and young adult. The music blends her childhood memories, the Arabic music constantly played at her grandfather's house, an interest in Egyptian culture and her love of horror movies.

Based on Poggi's operatic rock vocals, Dendura transcends the boundaries of progmetal, to create a mysterious, unforgettable soundscape. Over the years, creative energies have been channeled into performing, song writing and film score creation.

In April 2006, Dendura released *New Life*, their debut album, which attracted several film directors who licensed tracks for various projects including the award-winning film *Broken*, *Perception* and *InZero*, a popular made-for-TV sci-fi series. Meanwhile, the press continued to praise their originality and Egyptian-infused sound. Dendura also hit the metal buzz bandwagon in Brazil, Egypt, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and the US. Launching into high gear, Dendura was filmed for an episode of a reality TV series, penned a metal version of the *In the Hall of the Mountain*



Aziza Poggi

King for the Comedy Central series *Monsters Ballz* and appeared on the ABC TV affiliate (WZZM) in their hometown of Grand Rapids, MI. They also played with Edguy and Kamelot (who recently did some European dates with Aerosmith), Light This City and Lennex (featuring Phil Ritchie, a finalist on the CBS TV series *Rock Star Supernova*.)

Within four years of its inception, Dendura achieved recognition in the world wide metal community. CD *New Life* reached top 10 at Sonic Cathedral and tracks have been included on a number of metal compilations. Again, looking to the Middle East for creative stimulation, they started incorporating belly dancers to evoke an air of exotic mystery to their live shows.

In addition to being a driving force and a charismatic performer, Poggi is a long-term vocal student, always exploring and pushing boundaries. In 2008, after four years of classical voice instruction, she began studies with Melissa Ferlaak, female vocalist of Napalm Records band, *Visions of Atlantis*. Ferlaak also toured with Epica (Nuclear Blast Records) and was the female vocalist for band *Aesma Daeva*.

Under Ferlaak's tutelage, Poggi's progress in operatic technique has accelerated; and with Ferlaak's encouragement, she attended a Classical Singers Convention in Chicago in May this year. "I was excited and very nervous," says Poggi. This is an amazing path for a person who was told by her first vocal coach that she should never sing. Although crushed, Poggi knew deep within herself that the coach had not heard her true voice and she forged on pursuing her dream. She states, "As a little Arabic/Italian girl, in a blonde Dutch/German neighborhood, I did not exactly fit in and had to find my own way. It made me strong."

As she practices, the room fills with sound. After running through a set of vocal warm-ups, she explains, "Of all of these arias, I most love *Vissi D'arte*, --it is so filled with emotion that it makes me cry sometimes as I practice. It reminds me of my son." To hear these samples, [www.azizaworld.com/resume.html](http://www.azizaworld.com/resume.html). In Poggi's music room hang photos of opera stars Beverly Sills, Rosa Ponselle, Renata Tebaldi, Fiorenza Cossotto, Marilyn Horne, Joan Sutherland and Renee Fleming. Among these are photos of Greek singers, Savina Yannatou, and Glykeria and Arabic pop singer, Natacha Atlas. "These three singers" she explains, "are just as powerful in conveying emotion, but use an entirely different technique to do it."

"People are intrigued when I tell them I

perform these styles because they are so different. But it is because they are so different that I can do them and never confuse them. In operatic or classical style, support and resonance are critical because a large concert hall needs to be filled with sound to convey the story of the opera. In eastern style, performances, historically, were done more informally and in smaller rooms. Emotion in vocal technique can be expressed in very intimate way using breath and ornamentation. The breath support is the same, but the delivery is so different."

In 2006, when Poggi was screening belly dancers for Dendura shows, she met Kathy Roberts, founder of Ensemble Al-Asdeka, an instrumental Middle-eastern fusion band. [www.al-asdeka.com](http://www.al-asdeka.com) In 2005, Ensemble Al-Asdeka was formed out of inspiration from years of living off and on in North Africa.

Their first CD was produced by Roberts and Robyn Robins, former member of the Bob Seger Silver Bullet Band, who has mastered over 60 platinum albums for artists over the world. Released in December of 2007, it was chosen as "Editor's Pick" at CD Baby, and is listed in *Magnatune's* top 10 best sellers in World music, and has

been played on over 50 radio stations in over 50 countries.

The soundtrack for a Qatar tourism video is the CD's *Flute Taqsim*. Poggi and Roberts began talking about collaborating already in 2006. One day in December 2008, Roberts dropped off a box with nearly one hundred CDs and told Poggi to pick out what moved her. Amina Alaoui, Glykeria, Savina Yannatou, Souad Massi, Najat Attabou, Rima Khcheich, Um Kalthoum, Esma Redzepova, Beata Palya and Smadar Levi were among them. Poggi listened and made her selections.

She chose the vocal style of Greek songbird, Glykeria, as a model. She says, "Many people here would not appreciate her sound, but I can hear how she uses the tools of eastern music: the changes in the timing of a phrase, the turns and ornaments, and how feeling is transmitting by her voice-- this is a great place to start." Of Poggi, Roberts says, "From the first time we played and sang, just the two of us-- voice and drum, I could hear it all put together." That



night they decided to form the new group, AzizA world music fusion. [www.azizaworld.com](http://www.azizaworld.com)

This group is composed of vocalist Aziza, Poggi, tabla player Kathy Roberts, multi instrumentalist Daniel Giacobazzi, and guitarist D. Adam Estner. The focus of this group is not to merely mimic the eastern style, but to take western jazz and rock influence, blend it with the eastern and create something new.

Of AzizA song selection Poggi says, "I don't know where my love, my preference for songs in minor scales comes from, but it has always been there, even as a child. These tunes dredge up something very primal in me. It's not like I am an unhappy person, but more that my heart needs to get its melancholy out in the music, so I can be happy the rest of the time. So many people like pop music with its happy, upbeat melodies, but it does nothing for me. I like some darkness in my music. My life has been full of challenges and my soul resonates with this music."

As world music makes its way into the mainstream, more and more people are hearing music that doesn't quite sound like it is exactly in tune at times. "Many western people don't quite realize they are hearing microtones. They sort of slide by your brain at first. Those notes are the notes in between the notes, the microtones, sometimes called quartertones. Academics are familiar with them, but the average listener is not. Natacha Atlas, a crossover artist now on her own, and also with Transglobal Underground, has introduced many to the sound of the microtone."

When it became clear that she had to learn new vocal technique to be able to convey the emotion of this music, Poggi became

interested in Arabic maqam, (Arabic scales incorporating microtones). To practice, Poggi will go to the home of an Arabic keyboard player in her hometown, or use Sami Abu Shumays' maqam lessons mp3s from [www.samimusicworld.com](http://www.samimusicworld.com). "It takes considerable practice to be able to reproduce the microtone when you have been trained in the western chromatic scales. These on-line lessons from Abu Shumays are great tools for people like me. At the end of August, I will attend Simon Shaheen's Annual Arabic Music Retreat, where I will study maqam everyday. I will have the extraordinary opportunity to have Lebanese singer, Rima Khcheich as my vocal coach." says Poggi.

Whatever style she sings, Aziza Poggi brings her acting and musical experience together with her perseverance and dedication, and creates a larger than life stage presence. "I would love to go on world tour" she states, "AND have an

*Don't be alarmed, Ken Nixon - Framed Hanley continued from 29*

KN: We want to be one of those bands that continue to evolve with every album. We want to continue to push it and be open to change in the sound if need be. We just hope to continue to be writing and touring in 10 years.

Framing Hanley is a great story of a band who has lost, learned, and taught fans what is important. Lessons learned have carved their way into Ken's lyrics.

As tribute to their loss, they pay homage to a photographer who was the band's 6th man. The excitement, rock, and power that Framing Hanley shows bring are a testament of good things to come from this band. It won't be long before the continuous hits come this band.

As a music enthusiast as we are, we are excited to be part of the Framing Hanley team. One thing is certain, their shows are fun and loaded with fans of all

## Vocal Coach Tip

If you have muscles tightening in your throat, or under your chin, then you need to drop your jaw.



-Jessica Ford  
Nashville, TN

Master Vocal Coach  
The Singing Studio  
Studio: 615.397.2563  
[www.TheSingingStudio.net](http://www.TheSingingStudio.net)  
[www.myspace.com/douglascornermusic](http://www.myspace.com/douglascornermusic)  
[www.myspace.com/jessicafordmusic](http://www.myspace.com/jessicafordmusic)  
ASCAP

eastern/western crossover hit. If I be more who I am as I get older and can blend what I am with what I love, and create something beautiful, what more can a person want?"

-Kathy Roberts



Ken Nixon, Framing Hanley. Scout Bar, SA

types.

Even better, FH are a group of grounded guys who take the time to meet their fans. Many bands can become secluded in their success, but FH enjoy the extended FH family. As in Texas, or anywhere else in the U.S. and world, Framing Hanley shows are a **MUST!**

Seriously, who else has a very 'eye'-catching tattoo on his left elbow that is easily recognizable? \*cough\* Ken Nixon.

Framing Hanley, that's who you want to invite to your memorable moments. Don't forget to go to their various sites and add them as your friend.