

The Kiff interview

 By [Pasqua Heard](#)

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It's been quite a week for The Kiffness, as they released their new single 'You Say You Love Me' celebrating the LGBT community and questioned Woolworths' standard of beauty demonstrated through its choice of mannequins.

The live electronic act, consisting of David Scott and Clem Carr, has been pleasing eardrums and challenging mindsets since early 2010. The Kiffness defines their sound as "jazzy, groovy and uplifting house music". This is an apt description particularly for their latest single, which is bound to have your head nodding or foot tapping - or whatever your natural response to good music is - in no time! 'You Say You Love Me', featuring Tawanna Shaunte's "You Say" lyrics, represents the LGBT community and is dedicated to the victims of the shooting at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida on 12 June 2016, which tragically happened on the same day that The Kiffness filmed their music video.

Watch the video of 'You Say You Love Me' below featuring lead performer, Manila Von Teez, a drag queen entertainer based in Cape Town and back-up dancers Maxine Wild and Jayde Kay Johnson.

As The Kiffness has grown, so has their influence. For instance, earlier this week, Scott had over 10 thousand people reacting to a photo of himself standing next to a spindly mannequin in Woolworths contesting the retailer's decision to stock mannequins which were not a true depiction of the "average female body". The caption that accompanied the photo read: "Dear [@woolworths_sa](#). I've had your chicken kebabs & they're delicious but yoh man, your kebab sticks are thicker than your mannequins legs. No wonder my wife keeps asking if she looks fat in her jeans. Shame on you!"



The Kiffness also gained traction on social media last year when it embarked on a hilarious campaign to bring an end to Telkom's talking baby adverts. Much to the public's surprise, The Kiffness even managed to get a response from the telecommunications provider!

Without further ado, I'll hand over to The Kiffness to do the talking...

🎪 ***Tell us your background. When and how did you get into music?***

Music has always been a part of my life. I originally studied to become a doctor, but dropped it after six months, after I realised I had no time to make music.

🎪 ***What has been the best as well as the most challenging part of your music career so far?***

I love being my own boss and being able to call my own shots. It can be challenging being away from home if I have a busy tour schedule.



■ ***When you aren't making music or performing, what are you doing?***

Either playing video games, surfing or simply sitting and pondering the complexities of life.

■ ***Explain the story behind your latest single, You say you love me. What inspired you to make the song?***

I had a really tough time at junior school. I was once at a sleepover with a bunch of mates and we were all mucking about and long story short I touched a boy's penis. The boy shouted to everyone "Hey guys, Dave touched my winky!"

The next day rumour quickly spread that I was gay and it wasn't long before I became the laughing stock of the school. I knew that I wasn't gay and that I was just being silly and curious, but going through junior school and parts of high school being called "gay" or "faggot" did a lot of damage to me. Even as I write this I can feel the hurt that this caused rising up and creating a pain in my chest.

Now even though this was painful to write, that part of my life has passed and I have made peace and forgiven those that teased me and brought me this pain. I am now married to the woman of my dreams and I couldn't be happier. With this being said, I often think to myself - what if I was gay? What if I was bullied for being something that was the foundation of who I am? How much more hurt would that have caused?

Although I'll never be able to fully comprehend the pain that members of the LGBT community go through on a daily basis, I can relate to the pain on some level. I think that's why I am so proud of the music video for our new song, because it sends a strong message that you should never be ashamed of who you are or what you have done.

I have learned that being vulnerable takes a certain level of courage and it can be scary, but when you bring the things you keep secret out of the dark and into the light, the crippling fear that the secret once had over you is lost and is replaced with joy and peace.



■ ***Tell us the story behind the lyrics.***

I was looking for a vocal for the track, and after trawling through YouTube for hours looking for a vocal I came across the acapella for Tawanna Shaunte's 'You Say'. I sped the sample up and pitched it up and it fit the song perfectly. I sent Tawanna the song and she replied saying that she loved it, so we made it an official collaboration.

If you look at the original video you will see that Tawanna is singing to a little girl (presumably her daughter) about how she's upset that she is failing school and her poor marks are a reflection of how the daughter says that she loves her mother, but if she actually did love her mom then she would be doing better at school. The song has since taken on a very different meaning with the video.



■ ***Do you use your influence to create public debate and discussion intentionally? And, if so, what do you hope to achieve through it?***

I feel that my influence doesn't necessarily come from my platform as a musician. I feel like I'm someone who primarily cares about societal issues, and I just happen to be a musician. While I love performing my music and I believe it is a great platform to uplift people, I feel that my influence on social media sprung from a desire to create something real and interesting online.

■ ***With many brands sending all kinds of messages to the public, how do you choose your 'targets'?***

I don't choose them, they present themselves to me. I didn't ask to watch Telkom's talking baby advert, nor did I deliberately seek out skinny mannequins. They evoke certain emotions within me, and if the emotion is strong enough I try to portray what I was feeling when these brands' ideas or adverts presented themselves to me. I think a lot of people think they're the only ones who feel a certain way when they see or hear something, but I've found that through sharing how I feel about things I get a lot of people leaving comments like "OMG, I thought I was the only one who thought that was weird."

■ ***How do you handle criticism, both of your music and of your views?***

You can be the juiciest, ripest most delicious peach there ever was, but there will still be people who hate peaches.

I used to be very sensitive to criticism, but I've learned that if I believe in something and I know it has the potential to bring a positive change then I really couldn't care about whatever hatred comes my way. I'd rather create something and evoke a strong emotion in someone (even if that emotion is hate) than have something lukewarm that doesn't evoke anything in anyone. If I get overwhelming love for something, there will generally be a few people who express extreme hate for the same thing.



■ ***It's no secret that you have Steri Stumpie's back. What is with your love for Steri Stumpie?***

As a student, my digsmates and I were very poor, so we couldn't really afford to spoil ourselves with treats. Every now and then Pick 'n Pay would put Steri Stumpies on special and it would be a marvelous occasion knowing that we could treat ourselves to the milky goodness during those sales. If only Steri Stumpie sent me a lifetime supply of Steri Stumpie during those trying times, I would've had a much easier time at varsity.

■ ***What are your upcoming plans for tours or a new album? Do you have any plans to collaborate with any other artists in the near future?***

We are very close to releasing our new six track EP 'Soul Safari' featuring 'You Say You Love Me' as well as our colab with Tresor 'Evergreen'.

We have collaborated with Pascal Righini from The Plastics who has started a new solo project called 'Yum Yuck'. We have also done two other songs with two new up and coming singers Josh Wantie and Campbell Colledge.

We are also very excited to play at Oppikoppi and later on in the year, we will be playing our first international festival in Bahrain.

Find out more about The Kiffness via [their website](#), [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

ABOUT PASQUA HEARD

Communications Associate, DGMT

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