



# Nelly Furtado

## Musical Folklore

By Dan Rueckert

### IN THE SPRING OF 2002, NELLY FURTADO BECAME FAMOUS.

She was already known by many people who enjoyed her multi-platinum selling CD *Whoa, Nelly!* This was a different kind of famous. Nelly Furtado was nominated for four Grammy Awards. The Grammy Awards are the greatest prize for any musician to win. Before, she was famous to those who had listened to her music. Now she was not only famous but also respected by record companies and other musician. Nelly changed from a star to a superstar. That night Nelly won the Grammy Award for Best Female Pop Vocal Performance for her song “I’m Like a Bird”. She was famous, successful and on top of the world and then she disappeared. We didn’t hear from her for almost two years but now she’s back with a new album, a new style, and a new child.

Nelly Furtado is a first generation Canadian. Her parents immigrated to Canada from Portugal. Like most immigrants her parents worked hard at difficult jobs. Her father was a Stone Mason and her mother worked in housekeeping at The Robin Hood Motel. Nelly worked with her mother at The Robin Hood for eight summers. This taught her to work hard.

When Furtado was growing up she loved pop culture. She loved pop culture but there were no Portuguese people on TV or magazines. She told Interview Magazine “I’d be sitting there as a kid thinking, One day I’m going to be on TV so all the little Portuguese girls can identify with somebody”.

As an immigrant child, she spent time in a community that was full of other immigrant children from China, India, Africa, and Latin America. “I experienced many different cultures, which enriched my musical knowledge” she said. This cultural knowledge is noticed in her music. She brings elements from many cultures and musical styles to her music.

Nelly is not your average musician. She has been influenced by a lot of different music styles from many cultures. When she was growing up in Canada, her mother used to sing in the church. The church would perform at big festivals like Portugal Day. When her mother used to practice with the other women Nelly would listen. When she was four she performed on stage with her mother. She always loved performing for a crowd.

As she grew up the music she listened to became more diverse. She’d listen to Billy Joel, Lionel Richie, and Abba. She began with these pop groups but soon



Nelly has been influenced by music styles from many different cultures.

Photos courtesy of Dreamworks Records

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moved on to other, more hip-hop groups like Bel Biv Devoe, De La Soul, and TLC. Towards the end of her high school years she began listening to her brothers music collection and discovered Radiohead, U2, and The Verve. Ever since then she has been listening to different styles of music like African and Brazilian music. She has always listened to a wide variety of music and this helped her to create a completely new sound of music when she released her first album “Whoa Nelly”.

“Whoa Nelly” is full of fast paced, beat heavy music that makes people want to move. It’s a very energetic album. She mixed hip-hop, Portuguese fado, pop, soul, classical, Brazilian, dance, folk, and Latin together to create an original sounding album. She wanted to “share goodness and positivity and bright colors with the world”. Sharing her music with the world is exactly what she did. Her album went platinum in Canada, New Zealand, US, UK,

Australia, Ireland, Mexico, Portugal, and Switzerland. It also went gold in Chile, Denmark, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, and Venezuela. She became successful internationally.

Now Nelly Furtado is about to release her second album “Folklore” to the world. The experience making this album has been different from the last album. She is already famous and she’s no longer a teenager. Nelly is now 24 years old and just had her first child. She’s more mellow on this album. Before her focus was on creating an energetic, vibrant album. Now she has created a theme for the album. The theme is folklore. Folklore is the history behind a culture or people. Anything that influences a culture can be considered folklore. This album is “the folklore of my mind” says Furtado. She used her own experiences to create this album. Being a child of immigrants and feeling partially separated from society is described

in the song Powerless (Say What You Want). She uses terms from Brazilian Capoeira in her song Explode. She also sings part of the song Força in Portuguese. This is Folklore, the story behind a person, the story behind Nelly Furtado.

Last year Nelly went on vacation with her family to The Azores, a group of Portuguese islands. This is where her family is from. While they were there the idea for folklore became clear to Furtado. “I was visiting a grandparent of a friend of mine, and elderly woman. I was at her house and she had all her beautiful old antique photos laid out on her cement terrace on the top of this hill. So, all these old photos were laid out on this cement table; all her things were outside the house. And it started to rain a little bit, and she had all her clothing hanging on the clothesline. And on top of this beautiful hill, I could see the ocean down below, and the hills over there. And in the distance, I heard a young person drive by with their booming system cranking techno music.” This is what Furtado’s new album is about. It’s about remembering the past while continuing with the present. This is about using something beautiful from the past and making it beautiful again by mixing it with what’s modern. **SW?**

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What kind of music is traditional from your country?
2. What is folklore?
3. How does your “culture” effect your life?