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Kassandra Dasent

The music in her soul

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Yet another Trinidadian is creating waves in the international music industry.

This time, the singer-songwriter Kassandra Dasent, who was born in San Juan, Trinidad, is representing our country in Montreal, Canada where she has been living for over 20 years.

An accomplished model, musician and actress in Canada, Dasent, 34, has performed around the world, holding gigs with Canadian entertainment company Cirque du Soleil, South African performer Lorraine Klaasen and musician André-Marie Tala. She has also co-written and collaborated on numerous tracks for other artists and has appeared in several feature films, including the 2007 musical film *I'm Not There*.

She has recently completed her own debut album *Road to Rebellion*, which was described in her biography as fierce, unapologetic and enlightened, "a journey of self-discovery, a life-changing experience not for the faint of heart".

Dasent, the only child born to both her parents, has a true cosmopolitan background. Her mother is Indo-Trinidadian while her father, born in St. Vincent is mixed with Carib Indian, African and Irish. She spent the first six years of her life in Trinidad before migrating to Montreal, Canada.

Explaining that her parents were separated since she was born, Dasent said she migrated to Canada with her mother, Shirley Bullett in 1982.

Though she left her homeland during her early childhood, Dasent is still fiercely Trini, and she has acknowledged that her childhood exposure to local chutney, soca and calypso has helped to influence her love for music.

Dasent's musical talent was identified by her mother when she was six years old and singing alongside Hindi records. This thirst for music was nurtured, and at the age of seven, she began classical training as a clarinettist.

"I was a musician for many years," she said. "I was playing the clarinet and tenor sax in high school orchestras and jazz bands. In church I sang with the choir and played with the band and bells orchestras. During my late teens I began singing in large gospel choirs, learning and developing the techniques needed to sustain a powerful voice but I was at that point too shy and nervous to be a soloist."

Though she was nervous about solo gigs in her teens, Dasent was always clear that hers would be a career in music, so she studied music, graduating from Lindsay Place High School with honours in music and studying clarinet at Vanier College. She also holds a university certificate in Human Resources from Concordia University and is a certified

Credit Analyst.

Dasent believes that her Canadian education has afforded her immense exposure in the field of music.

"Living in Canada certainly afforded me the opportunity to attend institutions where music programmes are an integral and highly regarded component in the overall educational curriculum," she explained. "By being exposed to so many musical genres and cultures as a result I feel that I am a more creative and open minded musician."

She was in her late twenties when she began her major performances, first singing as a backup vocalist to international artists and later on her own. In 2006 she began song-writing.

"The first song I penned is called He Is Waiting," she said. "It was written during an especially dark and emotionally conflicting time in my life and I turned to God for help. The chorus goes: 'For God, He is listening and He hears your solemn cry. He is waiting to receive you in His everlasting arms. He is waiting to receive you in His everlasting arms'" Typical Dasent style. When writing and performing, she has taken the deliberate approach to be introspective.

As her musical career developed, she began to write the material for her first album and in early 2010 she decided that the time was right to establish herself concretely in the

music industry as a solo artist. She partnered with producer Doug St-Louis in Montreal and Road To Rebellion is the end result of that collaboration.

Enamoured of sounds from many genres and eras Dasent relies upon her musical abilities and her unique perspective on life to write potent lyrics about love, life, pain and healing.

Any chance of her taking that unique perspective and writing or performing a soca tune any time soon? She laughed.

"The idea of doing a Soca remix of one of my album tracks has been suggested and I am open to the possibility," she said. For now, she remains an avid fan of a number of local artistes with 2010 Soca Monarch and Road March Winners JW & Blaze at the top of her list.

While she is thankful for her own exposure, Dasent has identified the need for more resources and musical programmes for young Trinbagonians to foster an appreciation for music native to Trinidad & Tobago as well as to afford the opportunity for expanding their musical horizons.

"There is enormous potential that needs to be harnessed, however music must be perceived and respected by parents and the educational system as being a veritable vocation and not simply as a hobby," she said. "Music is a powerful and effective means of transmitting the beliefs, ideas and culture of a society. Also, a system should be implemented so that the music of established local and emerging artists be awarded a fairer percentage of airplay on radio stations and be compensated for such airplay."

Road To Rebellion is scheduled for release in April 2011.