

Living the dream

Lebanese-Swedish singer-songwriter
Therése Neaimé is taking the Middle
East – and the world – by storm



Although born and raised in Sweden, Therése Neaimé's Lebanese father had a clear influence on her musical career, from the sounds of her extended family back home to his support as she began singing with the Stockholm East Gospel Choir. Now she is enjoying growing acclaim around the world as an accomplished singer-songwriter, where she blends her sweet, honey-textured vocals with uplifting melodies.

Initially breaking through in 2005 in her native Sweden, including several number ones through to the middle of 2006, her debut album *Livin'* was a success around the world, helping her find audiences in America and, most tellingly, in the Middle East. It led to a string of performances in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, and a growing fan base inspired by her music and her heritage. Having opened for soul legends Simply Red last summer, and even performed in Afghanistan, she is ready to promote her as-yet-unnamed second album, which is already in strong demand following the success of lead-off single "All I Think About Is You".

The build-up to the second album is now growing; what can your fans expect – is there much of a change or development in your material?

Therése Neaimé: I certainly think I've developed as a singer-songwriter and as an artist, but my songs still come from my heart and I think people will feel this. Especially when it comes to my new single "All I Think About Is You". The response to it has been overwhelming so far and even if the official release date worldwide is set for May, it is already playing on the A-playlists in the UAE.

The Middle East seems to be a growing part of your career; why do you think that is, and why are audiences there so appreciative?

TN: Well, first I hope it is because people here love my music. But I also believe my

Middle Eastern origins help; I think my fans feel that I'm authentic, that I'm one of them. The warm welcome makes me feel at home and appreciated, and that makes me want to come back for more concerts. I also feel very much honoured by the response of many young people who say that they see me as an inspiration of an "Arabian" woman living her dream.

Does your Lebanese heritage inform your style? Do you listen to Arabic music?

TN: Since a large part of my family lives in Lebanon, I grew up listening to Arabic music. It is reflected in my style maybe even more than other regional influences; you will hear it on my new album and also in my new single. I think it adds a certain edge to my music which makes it stand out from the mainstream.

Your album was recorded in Stockholm, LA and Berlin, and you have travelled the world to launch the singles; are you someone who loves adventure?

TN: I think it's very exciting that my music takes me around the world. When I flew from Europe to LA in March, I went from the airport straight to the recording studio and started to work right away, so it's a fantastic journey and I feel really blessed. I am living my dream and am having enormous fun in doing so.

If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would it be?

TN: Oh, with all those beautiful places I have come to know through my music, it would be unfair to single out one in particular! But maybe it would be great to escape to a remote and quiet place for a change for a couple of days, just to regain some energy and get even more inspiration.

■ Therése Neaimé's single "All I Think About Is You" is available on Future Records. www.neaime.net

