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# DINA CARROLL

A&M PRESS DEPARTMENT

BIOGRAPHY

**W**hile it's only been a dominant force over the last few years, music industry pundits agree that the U.K. finally has its own thriving black music scene. Artists like Sade, Lisa Stansfield and The Brand New Heavies have established themselves on both sides of the Atlantic, in the process of opening the doors for a slew of exciting new talent.

Unquestionably one of the brightest young stars to emerge from the burgeoning homegrown black music in the U.K. is **Dina Carroll**. With three Top 10 British hits, rave review from acclaimed critics and prestigious British industry awards already under her belt, Dina is now ready to share her musical gifts with international audiences on **SO CLOSE**, her debut album for A&M Records.

"I wanted to make a soul-oriented album," says Dina, who was born in Britain to an African-American father and Scottish/English mother, "because soul music artists like the Isley Brothers, Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding and the Temptations were the ones I listened to growing up." while Dina's vocal stylings are clearly influenced by such legendary performers, the music on her dazzling first album is clearly contemporary.

Co-writing eight of the ten tracks with U.K. producer Nigel Lowis and working with U.S. hitmakers Cole & Clivilles (of C+C Music Factory fame) on the track *"Special Kind Of Love,"* Dina's delivered a record that she feels expresses diverse aspects of her musicality. "There are some strong, uptempo dance tracks like *'Ain't No Man'* (the first British pop hit from the album), and *'Express'* which represents my sassy side," says the visually stunning vocalist, "and then there are some great ballads like *'Heaven Sent,'* which is absolutely my favorite track and *'So Close'* (the first U.S. single) which is a simple love song. All these songs say something important about me."

For Dina Carroll, the release of her first album represents the fullfillment of a dream that began during her formative years. "I heard a lot of music growing up," she recalls. "My father was really into gospel and in fact, a couple of cousins were in gospel groups. I used to sing around the house and I was always encouraged by my family and friends." Aside from die-hard R&B singers, Dina recalls that funkmasters like Parliament-Funkadelic and Bootsy Collins also played a key rold in her musical development and when the opportunity arose for Dina to test her viability as a singer with an unbiased audience at a local talent contest, she took it. As a result, "the group that won made some promises about me working with them, but you how that can go!" Dina chuckles.

Undaunted by the group's unfulfilled plans, Dina decided to step out: "My mother called up a small record label in London and made an appointment with the A&R guy. He called in the head of the company...and the next thing I knew I had a record deal."

Dealing with the inevitable period of dues-paying that comes for every aspiring recording artist, Dina's career didn't exactly hit the heights. That initial deal, a subsequent brief spell with Jive records (which resulted in a minor U.K. hit with a version of Dionne Warwick's c lassic "*Walk On By"*) and a featured spot on a couple of dance records that failed to give Dina the recognition her talent deserved. As it turned out, a subsequent phone call f rom an ex-manager provided the

ammunition for Dina's initial chart success.

"In 1990, I was asked to listen to a track of Carole King's *'It's Too Late,"*' Dina recalls. I did a vocal and I guess I did o.k.," she says modestly, "because the record went flying up the British charts!"

As featured singer for the group (known as Quartz), Dina found herself with a major Top 10 U.K. hit which turned out to be the prelude for a deal with A&M Records and the subsequent recording of her initial album.

A first release, the infectious dance-flavored *"Ain't No Man"* (mixed by C.J. Mackintosh, who has worked with hitmakers Jimmy Jam & Terry Lewis on remixes for the million-selling "Mo' Money" soundtrack) became a Top 10 hit in Europe as did *"Special Kind Of Love ,"* written and produced in New York by Cole & Clivilles, who had been suitably impressed with Dina's previous work.

By the beginning of 1992, Dina and Nigel Lowis (producer and co-writer) had s tarted preparing material for her auspicious debut album. "There was a certain 'feel' we wanted to capture on a couple of tracks, *'Heaven sent'* and *'This Time'* so we went to New York," Dina says. "We were very lucky because we got to work with some people I've always admired. Cissy Houston (Whitney's renowned gospel/R&B singing mother) brought in the choir from her New Hope Baptist Church. Leon Pendarvis, who's played keyboards on some many of Aretha Franklin's hits, while (famed session musician) Anthony Jackson played bass. The Blues Brothers' horn section added their special touch and just for good measure, we had members of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra on those two tracks. Just being around the caibre of muscians and singers we worked with in New York was inspiring."

By recording the majority of the album in the U.K., Dina was able to showcase the distinctive sound that has begun to emerge through the music of the U.K.'s black music artists, described as a genuine synthesis of British pop and American sould and dance styles. Typical are cuts like the house-flavored *"Falling," "Hold On,"* with its uplifting lyrical message and the compelling *"You'll Never Know ,"* which Dina states "is kinda dramatic. It's about pain and hurt and I'd say it expresses a darker side from a lyrical standpoint."

When British music critics warming to Dina's expressive vocal style ("her music's carved from the same musical stone that brought us Maria Carey and Lisa Stansfield," claimed one writer), the record-buying public enthusiastically embracing her music and now named as "Best Newcomer" in the British Black Music Awards, Dina Caroll's ready to make her mark worldwide. "Right now, I'm just focused on how audiences will respond to the album in different places like the U.S. I'll be more than happy if they like it...and if we sell millions, hey, that would be nice too!" Dina smiles.

Singer, songwriter and performer, Dina Carroll offers a truly transatlantic mix of great music, with feeling, passion and sincerity. And, quite naturally, lots of soul.