

SPOTLIGHT





Lisa

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Lisa

**STILL JAMMING STRONG**

by bill biss

There are generations of people who will instantly remember the hit songs generated by Lisa Lisa and the Cult Jam. Whether it is their song "Head To Toe" or numerous others such as "I Wonder If I Take You Home," "Lost in Emotion" or "All Cried Out." The group's distinctive blend of break dancing beats, music fueled by a mix of Latin and Pop sounds along with the sexy and sensational voice of lead singer, Lisa Lisa, are firmly entrenched in Pop music history and are still a staple today. From 1985 through 1994, the group excelled at music to make you dance and sing along to. Fast forward to 2008. Lisa Lisa released a solo recording on an independent label called *Life 'n Love*. Hearing this recent recording, her voice is not only as good as it ever was...it's better! Lisa Lisa will be performing at the House of Blues in Los Angeles on May 14 and at Viejas Casino in San Diego on May 15. *The Rage Monthly* caught up with Lisa who is on a current tour doing what she does best...entertaining her legion of devoted fans.

Lisa Lisa and the Cult Jam had such an incredible string of hits during the 1980s. Hearing Lisa's range, tone and quality anew on her latest *Life 'n Love*, it brought to mind another very popular performer Diana Ross. Asking Lisa if she remembered an album Ross did in 1989 called *Working Overtime*, she enthusiastically responds, "Of course I do. I was raised on Motown so anything and everything that had to do with The Supremes and Martha and the Vandellas and so on and so forth... I really truly, truly enjoyed. As time went on, I needed to put that in there. People needed to feel who I really am when it comes to music. I'm hoping that this album [*Life 'n Love*] did that for me."

Her solo CD is definitely packed with sounds of Funk, R&B, Latin, Dance and Pop. The song "Feels Like Love" makes your head bob and feet move right out of the gate with the slick groove and lyrics. Lisa explains why "Feels Like Love" made such an impression on her, "That was a song that was written already. Marcus Siskind had it and he said, 'Do you like this?' and I said, 'Yeah. But we're gonna have to change up a couple of things cause I gotta make it my feel...' To me, it's all about a feel. If I hear something and I think it's a hit, I don't care where it came from, I'm gonna do it. It had that feeling of... it reminded me of when I did 'Head To Toe.' I got that same exact feeling. I had to do it."

Lisa Lisa even has a name for certain songs and the way they make her feel. "I call it 'jeep music.' You're driving in a jeep in the summer. Maybe somewhere in Miami and you have the music on blast and that's the song that's kickin'."

Lisa Lisa has always had her own distinctive style and finds this so important in maintaining a solid career in the music business. She elaborates, "It's very important. If I don't like something, I'm not going to do it. You won't get the best out of me. I have to honestly like something. I have to feel it. It has to be about me, for me or I'm not going to do it. I can't possibly give the audience... my audience especially, who are such loyal fans and followers anything less. I would not want to disappoint them. I have to do something that they're going to love. Music is my way of speaking to them, my universal language so... they got to feel me."

Lisa's music has charmed generations of fans. Whether it's the former teenagers who now have teenagers of their own or the women who turn her music on to their daughters, nephews and nieces. There is a strong tradition of quality that keeps the music alive. Does she notice this effect in her audiences when performing? "Absolutely. I do these concerts and I see fans from back in the day with their children and their children's children. I recently did a TV show for Nickelodeon and I played a mom. You see the kids who watched that show. Those kids are now at these shows. It's great! It's just awesome to me. I thank God for it!"

Show business is hard work when you really strive to be the best you can be. Not a flash in the pan whose five minutes of fame should have been over five minutes ago. Entertainers have got to hold onto a strong vision of self and at the same time continue to dream big. Even with her success, Lisa still envisions a concept of a dream album she would do. "I would love to do an album celebrating all my women of music from back in the day. Patti LaBelle, Teena Marie... so many, so many. I would love to do an album like that."

It comes to mind that Lisa Lisa could easily and with incredible results create an all-Spanish album of songs. She adds, "I would love to do a Salsa album. But, I honestly have not done it simply because I choose not to sell out. Salsa is my culture (laughter) and if I mess it up, my family would beat me down! No... so I really do want to do it. I'm just waiting. I want to do it with the old-schoolers. I want to go there. I want to do it that way. I want to do it right. If God permits I do something like that... he's going to bring it to me in the right way."

One beautiful love song is called "I Hold It All Inside." Her voice is phenomenal and shows another strong facet of talent from Lisa Lisa. "Stephanie Saraco wrote that song. She's my manager and best friend for the past 18 years. 80 percent of the album is written and produced by Stephanie Saraco. We co-wrote and co-produced everything on the album. She is just an awesome artist. She's just got some funk in her... for a little Italian lady, she's got the funk in her."

Lisa Lisa was one of the first female artists to crossover in the 1980s from the Rhythm & Blues charts to Hot 100 to Dance charts. She describes how she felt about this phenomenon, "I never realized it. I never focused on it. I started in this business at the young



age of 14 with Full Force. It was hard then. It's hard now. I think it's getting better for women in the business. Especially me being a Latina... it's getting a little easier but I think the two things that kept me grounded and kept me going was what my mom instilled in me and the fact that I live for my music. Nothing can discourage me."

It is of my opinion that Lisa Lisa's voice has matured and is strikingly beautiful in the ballads and a joy to listen to with her up-tempo songs on *Life 'n Love*. Telling her this, she interjects... "Ahhh man! You're gonna make me cry. Cut it out! Ahhh. Thank you. I'm glad you said it. Nowadays music is so hard to really like. Whatever happened to originality? You know? What happened to it? The time when music was all about the music and not the visual... that's what we need to go back to. A live band and a live sound."