

1D ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Music substance over style



Hidden Beach recording artist Lina says her label allows her to concentrate on music not style.

By Cheris F. Hodges
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In the image-conscious music industry, two soul singers aren't standing on designer threads and revealing outfits. They're bringing music to people.

Newcomer Rhian Benson has sold close to 100,000 copies of "Gold Coast" through word of mouth. Her style brings to mind old school singers like Nina Simone.

"My style is dictated by the way I sing," she said last week at the Pantene Total You Tour. "I grew up listening to a lot of old music."

Hidden Beach recording artist Lina tells a similar story. Her first album, "Stranger on Earth," was released by Atlantic Records. Lina's music drew comparisons to jazz legend Billie Holiday.

This time around, Lina said the music is the most important thing. Her first Hidden Beach release, "Inner Beauty," will be released in September.

"At Atlantic, we spent most of our money on imaging," she said. "They wanted to make me the Dolce and Gabbana girl."

Benson, who is with the new label DKG Music, said she hasn't gone through the image drama, but she has heard the horror stories.

"I've been sheltered from that side of the business," she said. "But I've talked to people at major labels who deal with that."

Lina and Benson have sounds that aren't like the popular R&B that clogs radio airways. In other words, they sing rather than rely on catchy hip-hop beats.

"Music is so diluted," said Lina, whose single "Come to Moma" is expected to go to radio in the next few weeks. She added that many labels just put a short skirt on a pretty girl and put her in front of a camera and microphone. Or, she said, labels put an artist in a certain category.

"When I got to Atlantic, they wanted me to be hard and cursing," she said. But Hidden Beach, she said, just wants her to be herself. "They want the realness of the artist."

Benson said music has always been something she loved and it took a near death experience to put her on the path to starting her career. She received a degree in economics and was at Harvard University working on her masters when her mother got sick in London and became her caretaker. Her mother was diagnosed with cancer and was given a few months to live. "Luckily, touch wood," she said. "She's still here."

Benson said that experience showed her that life is short and it has to be lived to the fullest. So, she moved to Los Angeles to jump-start her career. Benson started singing at open mic clubs. She said a friend knew the CEO of DKG Music and introduced the two. "I got lucky," she said.

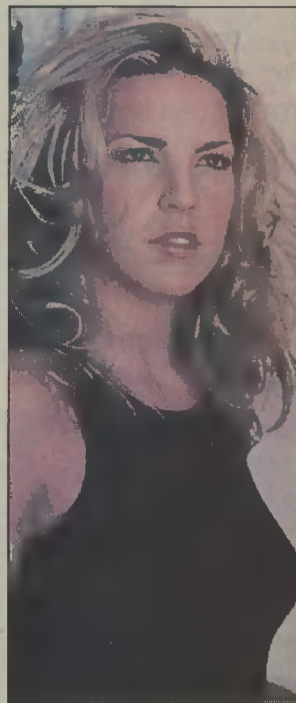
And Lina also said she feels her deal with Hidden Beach is a good fit as well.

"(Hidden Beach) said we fight to be first, not second," Lina said.



Rhian Benson

PHOTO/PAUL WILLIAMS



Diana Krall
The Girl In The Other Room
Tommy LiPuma and
Diana Krall, producers
Verve Records



Diana Krall departs from her smoky renderings of jazz standards by offering a CD of new material written with new hubby Elvis Costello. Yes, THAT Elvis Costello.

It may not sound like a match, but the pair work wonderfully together. Costello hasn't lost his touch with a clever lyric and Krall certainly knows how to interpret such. This recording works because Krall may have strayed from her material, but not style. She sings Costello's pop creations with the same verve as her jazz leanings.

And she doesn't stop at her collaborations with Costello. Krall is sensational on Van Morrison's "Temptation" as well as Mose Allison's "Stop This World."

Krall shines best on the new stuff. The title song is haunting and engaging, giving Krall the chance to flex her wonderful voice and fingers on the ivory. "I've Changed My Address" speaks of a woman who is on the move emotionally. "I'm Coming Through" picks up the pace a bit - just a bit - for a nice change of pace.

Krall has one heck of a lineup in the background. Christian McBride elegantly plucks the base while Terri Lyne Carrington plays the drums on a few songs.

The sound of this CD is pristine. My review copy was a Super Audio CD (SACD) and the mix was lively. Krall's voice floated from the center channel while piano, drums, bass and guitar seem to envelop me from the other speakers.

This isn't Krall's best, but I like what I hear. "The Girl In The Other Room" is the right career move.

Ratings

Classic;	☆☆☆☆
Excellent;	☆☆☆☆
Good	☆☆☆☆
Fair	☆☆☆☆
Why?	☆☆☆☆
No stars - A mess	☆☆☆☆

'Shrek' sequel at least equal to original tale

By Cheris F. Hodges
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The test of a sequel is if it can stand on its own.

In the case of "Shrek 2," it can. DreamWorks has done it again and this movie will be a hilarious hit for the summer.

"Shrek 2" picks up where the first left off. Shrek and Fiona return from their honeymoon to find a letter from Fiona's parents inviting the newlyweds over for dinner. The only problem is that they have no idea that their daughter is now an ogre. So the newlyweds and annoying Donkey head off to a kingdom Far, Far Away.

Eddie Murphy, who voices Donkey, is so believable as a friend who doesn't know how to shut up. He keeps asking questions and going on and on about nothing.

When they arrive at Fiona's parents home - the king and queen - everyone is expecting her to be beautiful and married to Prince Charming. Instead she is there with big old green Shrek and not the beauty she once was.

Now, in most fairy tales, we know the fairy godmother is a sweet pixie who will make all of your dreams come true. Not this rotten lady who is Prince Charming's mother and supposed to be Fiona's mother-in-law. The king made a deal with this double crossing witch and he is in jeopardy of losing his happily ever after if he doesn't get rid of Shrek.



Shrek, Fiona and Donkey return for DreamWorks' "Shrek 2."

Enter one of the funniest things ever seen on screen - Puss in Boots. Who knew Latino actor Antonio Banderas - known for serious roles and action movies - could be so funny. He and Donkey fight for Shrek's affection and the title of best friend.

Shrek is conscious of his looks and tries to get Fairy Godmother to help him with a potion so that he and Fiona can have their happily ever

after. No one knows that Fairy Godmother isn't the sweet old lady she appears to be.

Now, I'm not one to go ga-ga over computer graphics, but DreamWorks' team of designers have to be geniuses. There are parts of the movie that look as if it is live action. I do hate the ending - it seemed like a refresh of the end-

See SHREK/2D

Filmmaker shows different image of blacks

By Cheris F. Hodges
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Steve Rutherford saw one too many negative images of black folk on the local TV news.

The former TV reporter saw images of black people being arrested, getting killed and killing others for five years. When he tried to get his editors to do a "positive" story on African Americans, typically, they said no, Rutherford said.

"They feel like they have to shock people to

keep the ratings up," he said. Rutherford added that he often wondered why couldn't stations go to a "trailer park and get the same thing."

Rutherford said enough was enough and he left TV news so that he could show a side of black people that isn't normally seen at 6 p.m. and 11 p.m. Documentaries on African Americans made by African Americans, he said, have more power.

"When you are connected with a subject, you have a vested interest in it," he said. "I want

us to look great on screen and a lot of times we do not."

Last year, Rutherford started Production 13 Films. His documentary "My Soul Speaks," premiered at Spirit Square last weekend.

The documentary was shot over a seven-month period on location in Charlotte and Greensboro.

The film takes the viewer into a sub-culture of urban poets where they talk about relationships, love, sex, commitment and politics.

Please see RUTHERFORD/3D



Filmmaker Steve Rutherford

