

Dawn Richard And The Last Train To Paris (Interview)



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Dawn Richard's membership in Diddy's club music trio Dirty Money has transformed her into a modern dance diva. The former Danity Kane singer embarked on a daring trip with the hip-hop mogul three years ago when they started creating *The Last Train To Paris*. Her ex-boss and co-member used time spent in Ibiza; work with Felix Da Housecat and all of his musical history to make an alluring album about a transcontinental romance. They call their hybrid of hip-hop, techno, house and Prince-inspired soundscapes Train Music because of its refusal to stop at any one genre. The train metaphor also works because of the wavering emotions of the love affair at the center of the work. The Coming Home Tour in support of the release started last night in Minnesota and is already being praised for bringing the audience into an interactive experience in an intimate setting. I spoke briefly with Ms. Richard about her inclusion on the most relevant dance record of the year and her future solo project.

How would you describe the Dirty Money sound?

We call it Train music because we mix kind of these genres that influenced us through our time from rock, pop, soul and we try to combine it. I know Puff was saying he's a fan of Loose Ends and Soul II Soul and so he was kind of looking for

something in that vein and something different you know Jodeci and all of those innovative sounds that he wanted to do in a different way. So me coming from New Orleans and Kalenna coming from Philly and him coming from New York we kind of meshed those sounds together and created what we have now and I think Train music is an ever-progressive sound. It's always moving toward something forward it just drives you and I think that it kind of pushed people to move in a different pocket and dance in a different way. Every time I hear Dirty Money I think of I kind of think of what James Brown did when he did "I'm Black And I'm Proud" it was just a time when music was influencing a lot of political things and it just kind of made people happy about what they were doing. And they probably was dancing to a different beat and when he did that he kind of made people feel good about what they were doing and look toward a new cause and that's what we were trying to do. It's not the same thing I'm not comparing I'm just saying the sound of what we were doing. When everything was dance driven we wanted to come with something different kind of like we were the rebels of the school "The Breakfast Club," the crew that just kind of wanted to do it differently, that's kind of what our sound is.

The album tells a story about a relationship and there are a lot of different emotions what do you think is the sexiest aspect of the record?

I think the vulnerability is the sexiest part of this album. For example, my two favorites "First Place Loser" and "Shades" they kind of take Puff's perspective the male perspective in "Shades" him saying "I will take off my shades" it's really a metaphor. Puff always puts this wall up, for him to even say I will undress myself and show you the windows to my soul which is my eyes was something clever that I thought was really really vulnerable for him and it kind of made me feel like a stripped moment as well as "Coming Home." I think for us, "First Place Loser" being able to

say Iâ€™m going to be first place in this race for love and I think itâ€™s so clever because in love you really are running a race to lose yourself and I think you are winning but also losing yourself in the process because youâ€™re losing your heart to someone else and I think the vulnerability of that is super sexy.

What do you find to be innovative about this album?

I think weâ€™re just pushing boundaries for example, doing a record with Grace Jones working with an icon like her who doesnâ€™t even do features figuring out a sound that kind of makes sense with someone like her on the track. Or putting Justin Timberlake with Bilal and having Drake do a more soulful record like â€œLoving You No Moreâ€ where he does more than hip-hop. When you hear a Drake record you know itâ€™s Drake but kind of making him come into our world and make a record that is a little more R&B and soulful. Thatâ€™s how I think itâ€™s innovative for us even lyrically like doing a record like â€œAss On The Floorâ€ which is a club record but having lyrical content talking about something super serious really having those lyrics touch home. I think itâ€™s innovative and different and thatâ€™s what I think weâ€™ve tried to incorporate in our album.

[youtube]mDJwA6_KDP4[/youtube]

Who are your influences?

I grew-up a rock head actually. I grew-up loving The Cranberries, Bush, Green Day and Bif Naked which is an alternative band from Canada. Prince of course is my favorite because I feel like he transformed the look of music and the sound of it sonically.

Do you think itâ€™s been difficult for the average urban music lover to embrace The Last Train To Paris?

I just think that thereâ€™s always going to be naysayers. I

think it was hard because you take someone so big like Puff and you put two women on the side of him who aren't really known to the world the way people are supposed to see them. Because of course Kalenna was a writer and me coming from Danity Kane they only knew me as Danity Kane. So these are unfamiliar women and you put them on the side of him it's hard for people to digest. On top of the fact that we didn't choose to say "OK we're going to do a dance record we're gonna make it super easy we're going to take two weeks and throw it out there and if the world gets it they get it." We were choosing to kind of do things sonically that were different I say different meaning choosing not to do an all dance record not saying it's a bad thing we wanted to do something more soulful. So when you take two people that people don't know and then you do a soulful sound and mix it with something that's already a trend you're going against the grain yeah it's going to be hard for people to digest. I think we knew that, that's why we had to keep pushing that album back that's why the album took 365 years to come out. We weren't just saying Puff is Puff he can do whatever he wants and we wanted to take our time so that people understood what this was because we believed in it.

You've released your mixtape A Tell Tale Heart, what can you tell me about your upcoming solo project?

I really took a leap of faith when I did the mixed tape because I was doing Dirty Money and I didn't know what to expect. But a million downloads in a month I'm humbled by it because I just didn't know what to expect if people were willing to hear me by myself so being able to get that type of love is something that I couldn't have ever imagined. So for this new project I'm going to continue the journey and the album will be the actual walk through it. So the sound sonically will be heavy bass driven a lot of New Orleans influences as far as like the zydeco music, the drum that African vibe Cajun influence it's going to be heavy bass and

heavy drum. The storyline will be like literally I feel like my whole journey because my family and my foundation I feel like Iâ€™ve been naïve to this business and as Iâ€™ve gone through it I feel like my heart is the one precious thing Iâ€™ve tried to keep safe and pure in this whole thing. Thatâ€™s kind of the walk in everybodyâ€™s lives because they all have something that people always want whether itâ€™s their talent or their intellect or their heart. For me mine is the heart through my album Iâ€™m carrying my heart so my album will be that journey. Sonically it will be reminiscent of the drum, the heartbeat itâ€™s going to be dope and cohesive with the mixed tape.

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