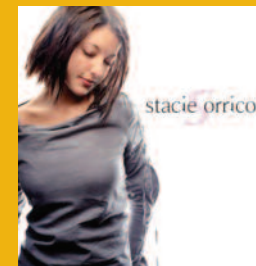


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stacie orrico



Stacie Orrico knows exactly what matters to her audience. “I like to write songs that have some depth and meaning and are really true to what I’m dealing with as a 17-year-old girl. You know, everything from my family to my relationships, good and bad. The mistakes I make, how I get through them—I like to put all that into my music, so other people my age can relate to it.”



“Not that you need to be best friends or anything, but I like to have a meal or a few hours of normal hang time before going into a room and starting to write.”

Orrico’s eponymous second album, recently released by Virgin Records, is the perfect showcase for her fluid urban-pop vocals and candid, confessional lyrics.

Stacie got an early start in the business. Signed to her first record deal at age 12, she quickly learned the importance of developing her own songwriting voice.

“Writing songs is essential for me,” she says. “It seems funny that a lot of young female singers are selling records to girls their age, but they’re singing songs written by 45-year-old men. And sometimes maybe they’re not really true to what’s going on in these girls’ lives. So for me, it’s been a priority to get involved in that process.”

But that doesn’t mean she shies away from collaborating with older songwriters. “It’s awesome. Okay, so sometimes you end up in conversations like, ‘You don’t know, you’re not a 17-year-old girl, and you never have been!’ But I’ve learned so much from writing with these people. I may be better at understanding what I’m going through as a 17-year-old girl, but that doesn’t necessarily mean I’m the best musician or the best lyricist I’ll ever be. Working with these other songwriters taught me how to write. When I was first signed, I had never written a song. But I realized immediately how important it was if I wanted to say something a little different with my music.”

What makes a successful songwriting collaboration work, in her view? “Having at least a bit of a personal relationship beforehand,” says Orrico. “Not that you need to be best friends or anything, but I like to have a meal or a few hours of normal hang time before going into a room and starting to write. There have been a couple times where you set up a writing appointment and go sit down in a room with someone you’ve never met, and then you’re supposed to bare your soul and your deepest thoughts. It can be kind of awkward, and I’ve ended up with some songs I’m not as happy with.”

“I’ve found it can be very rewarding to be open to other stylistic approaches.”



Still, she says, it’s important to come in with an open mind. “I’ve found it can be very rewarding to be open to other stylistic approaches. On this record, I collaborated with some writers who work in totally different styles, which led to some ideas I wouldn’t have thought of by myself. My first single is almost a rock/R&B song, which I never would have envisioned, but it works, and it really feels like my own. I work with some incredible producers who come up with stuff I never could have dreamed up. But I do my own vocal arrangements, and I have a lot of conversations with the producers about what instruments should go where and what feel to go for in what songs. I like to be involved in the process all the way through.”

Orrico’s Yamaha MOTIF8 gets a workout both onstage and in the studio. “It’s like the coolest keyboard ever made!” she enthuses. “As a piano player, I think the MOTIF’s acoustic piano sound is great, and the weighted keyboard feels really good. It covers so many different styles of music, which really works for the range of styles I’m bringing together. All the sounds are great. For example, I’m not usually into playing string parts on keyboard, but the MOTIF string sounds are beautiful, very full without sounding overdone or cheesy. Being able to have one keyboard that covers so much musical ground is really convenient.”

As a younger artist, how does Orrico balance between emulating musicians she admires and seeking her own style? “I’ve always enjoyed so many styles of music, from jazz to urban hip-hop to hard rock. For example, some of my favorite singers are Ella Fitzgerald, Lauryn Hill, Mariah Carey, and Alanis Morissette. I just try to take in all these influences, look at the elements I like best, and build on them to become my own person and my own writer.”