



Nash Reed has been performing in Bahrain since November, her smooth sound entertaining diners at the Mövenpick Hotel. Her new album hit the kingdom's radio waves just as this musical wanderer readied to move on once again. Enter her world that is a blend of cultural explorations, African roots and, of course, music.

BY CHRISTINA FERNANDES

# Songful nomad

*"Do what I do; say what I say. Live as I live and I pray as I pray. Expect what I get; get nothing less. I don't cheat, don't lie; just do my best. I've been around the corner once or twice before, where the welcome mat was something like a slamming door... You can't catch me; I'm free..."*

To me, these words from the song *Can't Catch Me* on her new album *Mercurial* lend themselves to describing Nash Reed. She is a lot like her lyrics: Strong yet sensitive; adaptable yet uncompromising. She knows what she wants and is not afraid to do what it takes to get it.

Nash has spent more than a decade on the road, exploring her place in the world at the same time as developing her music. "I'm a nomad at heart, maybe that's why this business suits me so much," she says.

She has performed in numerous countries, from her home nation of South Africa to Japan; Thailand to Jordan; the United Arab Emirates to China. Now her debut album has hit Bahrain's airwaves and she is ready to take on the new challenges of promoting her work internationally.

"I've been making music for a long time. Since I was four, I've been told. But Nash hasn't always been a singer. "I started out writing," she recalls. "I couldn't even sing, but I wanted to communicate what I was writing. So I just kept going and my singing kept getting better year after year. Finding my own voice has matured my song writing too."

### Sources of inspiration

Nash's taste in music is eclectic, to say the least, which is reflected in *Mercurial*. "To me, the strength of the album is that the influences are so varied," she says. It is difficult to name her favourite artist: "There are so many." From Freddy Mer-

cury to Chrissie Hyde and Gwen Stefani to Chaka Khan to JayZ, Nash is inspired by many singers from different genres.

But she takes ideas from more than just the world of songs. "It is not only music that moves me," she explains. "Relationships, the human condition, politics, design and construction influence my work

but with a fierce backbone" says Nash. "It's a little bit gritty...edgy. There's nothing obvious about it. It has a magnetism that creeps up on you. It was within my power to facilitate pure expression so I didn't set out with one target market in mind. Mark [Nash's producer and writing partner] and I just made music! If I had to describe the

album in one word, it would be 'timeless.' Play it back ten years from now, it will still move you."

The cover art is perhaps more elaborate than most would expect of a first album not to mention the video.

A lot of thought and creativity went into it, resulting in a mix of such motifs as Camps Bay in South Africa (where Nash is from), Nash in her garden and a dragon sculpture in Kiyoto (where she has performed).

"Everyone said 'it's your first album, are you crazy to spend so much money on the artwork?' But I say 'it's my baby, it's the first one. Nothing will ever be like it again,'" Nash comments.

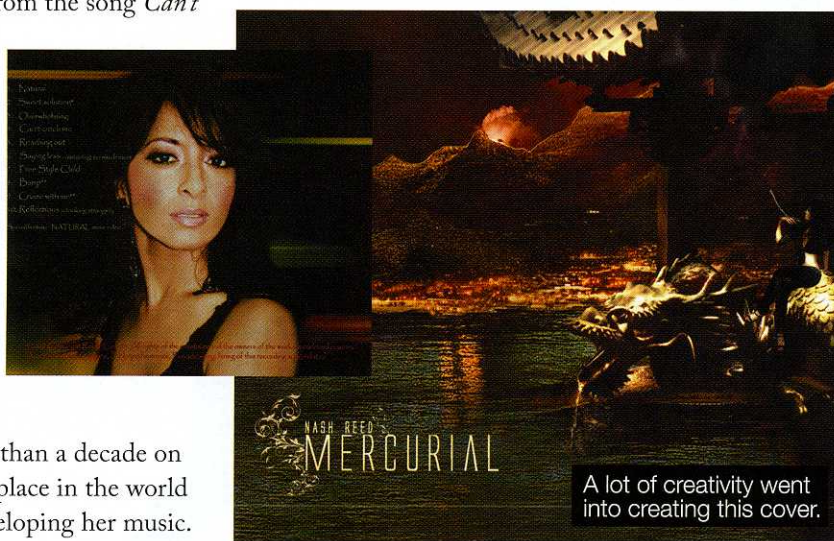
### Influential roots

"I was born in CapeTown and grew up there. I feel at home pretty much everywhere I travel but CapeTown is still home," says Nash.

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Artists oftentimes have a reputation of being a pain to live with, but not Nash. "I have a real live angel for a baby sis and one powerhouse of a woman for a mum, my family's very close" she says. "Every artist is a little difficult but I think I was okay."

Although it can be challenging to be



too. You can hear that on the album.

Art is the common thread weaving through her life. "I'm a bit stuck in my ways," she admits with a smile. "If it's artistic I like it. Though you have to have your wits about you, I prefer leaving the red tape of this business to someone trustworthy who's not me. Vision meets precision equals artistry! That's my alchemy." These are clear words and one of Nash's character traits is certainly directness.

"My heart is intense but pretty straightforward," she says. "I don't like too much fuss. Say it like it is."

Some musicians dread recording albums and thrive solely on playing live, but Nash enjoys herself in the studio. "I relish the recording process," she says. "Making this album was a gift; I had the time of my life. It grew so naturally...each musician's contribution was like a series of little explosions of 'wow!'"

*Mercurial* features the kind of easygoing groove that should appeal to a wide audience. "The album is sensual, mischievous



Performing live.

remember the values Nelson Mandela and all those who gave their lives (not so long ago) for our liberation stood for, reinforce and build on the positive work they set in motion back then.

you”), Stevie Wonder and the late King Hussein of Jordan, among others.

### Enslaving music

Although the music business is a difficult one to survive, Nash says she wouldn't have it any other way. “It gets into your soul, enslaves you so you can't ever leave it,” she says. “I tried a few times but it didn't work.”

While she's still working on promoting her first album, Nash is already thinking ahead. “The second album is being worked on,” she says. “It's a bit more soul/rock. *Mercurial* actually isn't my first either, it's just the first one I'm releasing. I guess the right one comes along

at the right time.”

Nash is planning on returning to Bahrain at the end of the year, after completing the promotional work for her album internationally.

“We will come back at the end of the year; we are trying to get distribution rights for the album here,” she says, adding that she enjoyed her stint in the kingdom. “When we came to Bahrain in November, we were meant to stay for three months, but we liked it, so we stuck around.”

A decade of taking her music around the world has shaped Nash not only into a strong, determined artist but also into a multi-faceted woman at home in the world.

She knows how to navigate the choppy waters of the business and allow herself to get distracted from living her life: “*I don't get caught in the middle of a storm where there ain't no shelter baby. Im not wasting my time on the promise of a fruit that goes by the name of maybe...*”

The *Mercurial* album from iTunes and CD Baby and the video from YouTube.



“Vision meets precision equals artistry! That's my alchemy.”

All the freedom and growth that liberation brought doesn't come without added responsibility.”

In what many would view as the ultimate success and privilege, Nash has sung for Nelson Mandela on two occasions.

She has also performed for Prince Albert of Monaco (“He's a fun guy, I tell

on the road most of the year, away from home and touring the world, Nash has the willpower to stick to her goals.

“Being South African has given me a blend of Eastern spirituality and sensibility but coming from Africa has given me strength and I've grown up inside her rhythm,” she says.

Nash has no illusions about the difficult path ahead for her country. “South Africa's transforming so fast, we have challenges ahead just like the rest of the planet,” she says. “Our job is to pay attention so that the direction our leaders are taking us in is where we see ourselves going as a country, that way we can endeavour to cast an educated vote at election time. We've just got to keep our heads about us now,