

TREMENDOUSLY TORI

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Intelligent. Intense. Incredible.

Elio Iannacci talks to Tori Amos about her latest and greatest musical endeavors. Known to most as a piano virtuoso and a poetic lyricist, Tori Amos' 15-year plus career in pop has managed to inspire more than a handful of singer-songwriters. With good reason. Ever since her debut with her now-classic first album, *Under the Pink*, Amos has been able to create music without the pressures of creating hit singles. Luckily, her creative chutzpah has translated into worldwide success and a throng of loyal fans who follow her every b-side.

However, to catch Ms. Amos live, especially while performing songs off her latest disc, *American Doll Posse* is an experience few singers on earth can replicate. The lady gives it her all onstage whilst delivering keyboard-driven tracks such as "Bouncing off the Clouds" and "Beauty of Speed" (off *American Doll Posse*) and rearranges her well-known songs such as "Cornflake Girl" and "Winter" in the most extraordinary of ways. Her passion for song may be tough to describe without sounding like a glassy-eyed English Lit major but one trip to youtube (keywords: tori amos in concert) will give you a taste of just how powerful her pipes and chords can be.

In this rare-but-revealing interview, Amos talks about the intricate process of music making and her journey in the studio and on tour (her next Canadian stage date will be in Vancouver on December 3rd) as well as her thoughts on the state and style of pop culture.



FLARE: How much of a diva are you? Do you need specific things around you—such as *Cristal* by the case—to record and write?

TA: (Laughs) No, no! Not at all. I record at Martian Engineering in Cornwall. But I write everywhere. I'm grabbing napkins in a coffee shop and writing things on the back with eyeliner if I have to. There are two sides to composing for me: there is a discipline. So when I do know that there is music coming from this creative force, the muses make me work for it. They don't just usually give me a whole song. It's a picture into a story and so then I have to sit down and play every day. I play for a few hours a day when I'm not on the road.

FLARE: When you are playing do you ever have sheet music from anybody else laying around for inspiration?

TA: Not when I'm composing. I'm clean. But I spend time taking in information. For instance, now as I go on tour, especially when I go out with the band this time, they'll be playing me anything and everything.

FLARE: You've always seen culture as a place that is filled with modern mythic gods and goddesses. Are celebrities a part of your consciousness?

TA: Yes, but a lot of them were very watered-down versions of the myths themselves. Some of the celebrities are damaged

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Aphrodite's, for instance. Many celebrities do not see the sacredness of their sexuality. I'm not just speaking about one Lindsay Lohan or Paris Hilton; I'm talking about those who fall into that pattern, a rut. As opposed to women who value their sexuality and it is a spiritual expression—erotica and spiritually can marry but you really have to work through the shaming that came from the patriarchy. How I show up for work is only one part of who I am.



FLARE: Have you been about to work it all out and if so, when did that process begin?

TA: I think becoming a mother was the missing piece of my puzzle. That's what I needed. I had experienced the warrior, I have experienced other facets of the feminine but the mother was what brought me real compassion for other women that I didn't have.

FLARE: I read that you spent a year with your stylist, just putting the wardrobe of this album together. Do you feel that dressing your performance enhances it?

TA: Of course. I see this work as a performance art piece—the music, the words, the delivery, the photographs. What I didn't do in my album *Strange Little Girls*, which I'm doing now, is taking the expression out of portraiture and moving it into 3D. I'm using the songs as a part of my palette but the wardrobe is also a part of it. That's how you begin to tell the story.

FLARE: You have some interesting theories on how popular culture gets popular. Is it true that you think the government in Washington and Hollywood are linked?

TA: There is a strange kind of symbiotic relationship with Washington and Hollywood—there always has been. And sometimes Hollywood is reacting to it and sometimes it is pandering to it.

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FLARE: What would you say it has been doing these past couple of year?

TA: I think that it has been intimidated by it, until recently. That whole rhetoric—if you don't support the troops then you are against the troops—is a kind of emotional blackmail that is used with words. Now it's starting to crumble.

FLARE: With all these albums behind you, how do you want to be perceived by your audience?

TA: What a huge question. *American Doll Posse* is my doctorate, my thesis. I know that I don't want to be seen as just one thing. Not just the career girl. I have an Aphrodite side, an Athena side, I have played the Persephone for a couple of album and I have an Artemis side to my life but lately my inner Demeter is coming out. They are all different facets of the self.



FLARE: Is there a fear of wearing your heart on your sleeve in public too much? Your songs are extremely emotional.

TA: I walk into the creator role so there is always sacrifice. You do hide your secrets in plain view. But where's the paradox? Can you be so intimate and so mysterious at the same time? I think you can. It can cause holy hell in my personal life sometimes, though.

FLARE: What's your take on reality television and YouTube and exposing blogs?

TA: They are very vulgar. When they occur, there is no place for the poetry to live.

FLARE: So I take it you aren't the gal who gabs about who will win in *American Idol*?

TA: I don't watch it because I am drawn to artists, not entertainers. And so that is where my focus is. This is an exciting time for me because so many are tired of the kind of fodder that we have been getting for four or five years. There are people who are composing and writing, bands, solo artists who are striving because there is too much of one thing.

—Elio Iannacci