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BREEZE
BY CLAUDIA PEGUS

CATCHING THE
CARNIVAL
SPIRIT

SHAKA HISLOP
FIELDS OUR QUESTIONS

MODE ÎLES'
ISLANDS OF
THE WORLD
FASHION WEEK
(BAHAMAS)

CANDACE
BUSHNELL

AUTHOR OF
SEX AND THE CITY
AND
LIPSTICK JUNGLE

ANNYA LI

A STAR ON THE RISE
Cover Costume: Tribe, Birds of a Feather

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DJ and Chef to the stars Nasty NAZ

Talk about rocketing to success; this young man knows the feeling of being catapulted into celebrity stardom. His professional career in the music industry as tour DJ, hypeman and chef - yes, chef - for the likes of Russell Simmons, Akon & Kardinal, Wyclef and Sean Paul, pitched this Trinidad-born entrepreneur into a class of his own.

BELLE: You grew up in Trinidad but you've been based in Canada since 2003. As an internationally acclaimed DJ who has recorded live shows for syndicated radio programming in Canada, New York and the Netherlands...can you clue us in on how you got started?

NAZ: I originally started way back in Trinidad while I was attending The University of New Brunswick (Trinidad Branch) and interning at 98.9 YES FM under the brilliant Mr. O'Brian Haynes, who taught me the ins and outs of the music industry.

One day I went with a DJ to a fete and when he went to the bathroom I put on a record when the song ended; having been a "record-boy" a number of times previously, I knew what records played when. The crowd loved the next selection! The DJ heard the cheering all the way from the bathroom. He returned to see me - the Marketing Assistant - on the turntables and thanked me for saving him. From then on, I kept going with different DJs to events, poking and prodding under their guidance and I also did my thing at a couple of house parties. I always practised what I learned and looked closely at others, while developing my own flare, energy and style.

BELLE: Talk about serendipity! So what do you think you would have been doing if fate hadn't stepped in?

NAZ: (Laughs). It's hard now to imagine my life out of the industry, but when I got

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started I was working on my Associate's degree in Business and dreaming of being a Pediatrician or Marine Biologist.

BELLE: Both great careers, but somehow Nasty Naz the Marine Biologist doesn't quite have the same flow as D.J. Nasty Naz. How do you feel when you're on that stage doing your thing?

NAZ: WOW....that's a great question! Well, before every show, I usually pray to God, to keep me safe and to allow me to do what I do best. When I step onto the stage, the sound of thousands of fans screaming my name in unison is absolutely amazing; it never fails to give me goose bumps. On stage I am usually quite pumped and I change into someone totally different - quite unlike the "Nice" Naz who is in this interview right now. When the "Nasty" persona comes out, anything and everything goes - diving into the crowd; getting people to take things off; getting each person in an arena, club, concert, or wherever I am performing, to move, dance and keep that energy up. The energy, love and support that I get from the fans, in turn, get me pumped.

BELLE: Sounds exhilarating! So what two things do you wish someone had

told you before you began on this career path?

NAZ: Ha. I hope there isn't a word limit on this article because there are so many things that I wish I knew beforehand. But I guess I can try to keep it to two things. One, the number of "haters" out there is ridiculous. There have been DJs who "hate on me" because of what I have accomplished. (continued on page 56)



DJ Nasty Naz and Sean Paul

(continued from page 51) They are envious of my exciting life and my drive. Sometimes it's hard to deal with but I've learnt to brush it off, realizing that this jealousy is something that helps make me stronger. It means I am doing *something* right!

The second thing is that you always have to try to do better than your last stage performance: improve on your song writing skills, DJ-ing and emceeing skills.

BELLE: What's your best advice to aspiring DJs out there?

NAZ: In my humble opinion, talent is something you are born with, you can't really learn that. However, talent is simply the spark to get you going - a call to perfect your craft. How far you go depends on how hungry you are; it must be a passion for you. You have to be ready to work your bum off, because this is NOT a 9-5 job. At 4 in the morning, guaranteed, you can call my Blackberry and find me up working.

Also, I cannot stress enough the need to "BE TRUE TO YOURSELF!" Find your groove and stick to it; stand your ground and be strong. Sometimes others won't see your idea or vision, but it's *yours*. No one can take that from you - *ever!* It's your job to make people see it and believe in you.

The music industry is a beast and a lady at the same time. If you don't watch for her fangs, she will bite you hard; if you treat her with respect and work to the bone for her, she will forever give you love.

BELLE: Great advice! I know you're around celebrities a lot. Has being around them changed you much?

NAZ: I feel so fortunate to be doing what I do. I wake up every day feeling blessed.

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Being around celebrities - no lie - is definitely a pretty wicked thing. The lifestyle they live and treat me to is amazing. I get to fly to a different city everyday while on tour, stay at pretty cool hotels, and attend some great after-parties. The artists that I have worked with, from Akon to Sean Paul to Wyclef to Black Eye Peas, have treated me like one of their own. We all eat together, chill out and harass each other while on tour. I definitely feel like part of the "tour family". Having my own great family, friends and a fan base also help keep my feet planted.

BELLE: So, not only are you a tour DJ but you're also a personal chef to many of these acts. What do you most like to cook?

NAZ: I really like coming up and experimenting with different types of dishes. I like to fuse different cultures and tastes etcetera. As any true Trini guy, I love to cook curry. My mom's coconut bread is a favourite by many artists like Russell Simmons and Leonard Cohen, even Sean Paul stole Akon's coconut loaf on tour... but I can also make a mean jerk chicken (at least that's what Snoop Dogg told me).


BELLE: What about your Trinidadian roots? Do they influence your work?

NAZ: My crazy Caribbean style definitely shines through my music, my energy, my accent and my swagger with the ladies.

BELLE: Would you DJ in Trinidad?

NAZ: I would definitely love to DJ again in Trinidad if given the chance, though I have since adopted more of a North American style. I may need a refresher course from my old crew, (laughs), but I am sure I can still hold it down!

BELLE: Tell us something that most people don't know about DJ NASTY NAZ.

NAZ: In an industry filled with drugs, sex and rock & roll (so to speak), and even with a name like "Nasty Naz" I have never done drugs, smoked or even tasted one drop of alcohol. I prefer to get "Nasty" on the stage, with my energy and crazy personality. Many people say that I have the smoothness and swagger of Diddy and the business acumen of Russell Simmons. I always laugh when they say that, because those are *very* big shoes to fill. Russell Simmons once went on the record describing me as "highly motivated, a born winner, full of resilience and faith". To this day, that memory makes my jaw drop. I have to continuously work hard to stay true to his statements.  - *Salisha Baboolal*

Want more? Then visit him at www.djnastynaz.com

Salisha Baboolal is the powerhouse behind ImagEngineer; her firm specializes in strategic self-marketing and corporate communications. To learn more, visit her at www.imagine-engineer.com