

# Let's Get Physical

## Talking Turner with Tina

It's the last Saturday in October and Tina Turner's tour director Rob Walker is telling me from LA that Tina has a hoarse voice and she's due to play in Dallas that night. Flicking through two sheaves of questions I assure him I won't keep her long.

"Hi," a voice croaks. Too much singing?

"Yeah, changing climates, flying, it could be anything."

At the time of the phone call Tina is in the middle of the American leg (sic) of the *Private Dancer* tour:

"It's going terrifically well. I've always had a market in Europe so we were all a little concerned how we'd do. We're all very surprised by the turn-out, the response and the reviews. It's all so positive it's staggering."

Her voice is sounding better. Why are you more popular in Europe?

"I don't know, that's getting into culture. You're asking me now why Europeans like R&B more than Americans. That's like asking me why some Americans like Latin music or whatever. The Europeans have studied and appreciated the roots of American music and they hold onto classic acts. If you've got something they'll wait for you and you'll last, whereas in America you only last as long as your record."

### Celluloid Heroes

Tina Turner has been 25 years in the business but for most people she's the *Private Dancer* or *Entity*, the anti-heroine of George Miller's third *Mad Max* movie. She's had movie parts before, her classic portrayal of the Acid Queen in Ken Russell's 1975 adaptation of *Tommy* springs to mind. What attracted her to the *Mad Max* role?

"I like that kind of film. I like the rough guys,

**"There are few R&B songs that I enjoy singing... I don't particularly care for R&B anymore."**

the cars, the dirt and the crazes of the period. I own both of the previous *Mad Max* tapes and I thought it would be great to do a movie like that.

"When I was offered the part I was really excited as I thought I'd get to do a lot of physical stuff but since it was my first straight dramatic part and I was only opening the door to acting I'm happy enough with the result. And yet when George saw my performance he said he could've done so much more with *Entity*'s part. But it was



Tina snapped live in her current publicity pic (top) and in the tongue-in-cheek (but perhaps close to home) photo on the back of the Phil Spector-produced *River Deep, Mountain High* LP, 1966.



a gas."

What did you find to be the most difficult aspect of acting as compared to performing?

"On stage I'm very physical. But for the movie part you've got to let the magic of the camera do it and you've got to become the part. It was very hard for me to be still and express myself from within without being so physical or too big or exaggerated for the camera. But after about a week I started mellowing out and sliding into it."

Have you ever felt restricted by your sexual image when it comes to the choice of movie parts?

"Yeah, I did, I became type-cast up to the Acid Queen. All the parts that came in were very cheap hooker parts but I stood firm and said no, I'm not gonna be on something I'm really embarrassed about. There were some things in *Acid Queen* I wasn't pleased about but that was my first role and I didn't know what was involved. Now and after that I've simply said *NO*, because I didn't have to because I still had my singing career."

"Entity had nothing to do with that sexuality. When the costumes were being cut I said 'you can't cut it that high or that will not be out and this will'. I still have a bit of pride as to how much I want to show or how much I want to give."

In a recent *Life* magazine it was stated: "She hankers for more rough-and-tumble film roles."

"Yeah, the movie *Colour Purple* had a part there for me but it was another singing semi-prostitute feeling thing. I'm not interested in playing those. It doesn't have to be a rumble-tumble part but it has to be interesting and uncommon. I have to be able to act and not do something I can relate so closely to."

### Vinyl Villains

Born Anna Mae Bullock in Nutbush, Tennessee, Tina Turner got her first break in the R&B Club Manhattan where Ike Turner, leader of the Kings of Rhythm (the band often credited as having released the first rock 'n' roll record, 'Rocket 88', in 1951) worked her into his show. Twenty five years ago Ike and Tina cut their first record, 'A Fool In Love' and their career together spanned the classic Phil Spector-produced 'River Deep, Mountain High' in 1966, Tina's 'Nutbush City Limits' single in 1973 and some 30 albums. Three years ago and eight years after she'd left Ike, Tina recorded the Temptations' 'Ball of Confusion', one of the few tracks that did work on BEF's (Heaven 17) *Music of Quality and Distinction* album:

"I've never liked that song. I've never been that much of a fan of the Temptations after David Ruffin left. I like the music of the song but I didn't know what song I was going to do for that album until I arrived in Europe to record it. And I thought how am I gonna sing this song as four guys originally did the vocals on this. It was really amusing as it wasn't in the right key so we had to make all kinds of adjustments. It came out terrifically

**"It's been 10 years since I left Ike and to tell you the truth I don't think that much about him."**

well but it was just a record, I've never tried to do it on stage."

The Heaven 17 connection continued with a rousing version of Al Green's 'Let's Stay Together', a single that hit the Top Five in Britain in 1983:

"That song's a lover from way back. There are few R&B songs that I enjoy singing but that's one. When Roger (since 1980 her manager) and I were trying to decide on a song to put out as a single for Europe we came up with that one even though I don't particularly care for R&B anymore. It's still wonderful to listen to."

From there it was to *Private Dancer* and Tina Turner was suddenly peaking at the age of 45. Fairytale stuff, especially for an album that has more brass than class, yet its sass and strong, varied covers have meant triple platinum status:

"It was such a sporadic album. It was like running from here, rehearsing, doing a rough vocal. I was just two weeks with all the guys in the studio and when I left they had to do the mixing. There was such a confusion of things going on that I was forgetting what I was doing or how anything sounded."

"When it all came together I sat and listened to it and I felt it sounded strange as it wasn't a one theme album with one producer having the same sound, but strangely enough every song fits in. I just felt I had an album full of good songs and I had something to put out for the people."

Was there a sense of make-it-or-break-it with *Private Dancer* due to your earlier lack of success?

"No, that's not a problem for me. I don't dwell on a hit record, I dwell on performance. I was basically enjoying my life and I never really knew

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