

Sakis Rouvas: Watch That Man!

Greece's only pop superstar talks to Athens Plus about music, fatherhood and his new movie

Sakis Rouvas- just that name, just those letters in that order: S-a-k-i-s R-o-u-v-a-s can send literally tens of thousands of Greek teeny-bopper and twenty-something girls into gynecological panics and mild neurasthenic disorders. The impossibly handsome, multi-talented singer, actor, dancer, musician and athlete has, in roughly the last twenty years, captured the heart, soul and imagination of an entire country, and done it with style. His breathtaking live shows, pop chart singles, television appearances and personal life are constant subjects of conversation in nearly every coffee shop, restaurant, bar and office in Greece.

2009 has been, unquestionably, a vintage year for our national paragon, the Sakis-man. His newest CD release, *Irthes*, shredded the charts with hits. His eye-popping performance of the song *This is Our Night* at the Eurovision contest in Moscow was a singular joy to behold among the mostly cheesy, plastic pop-ballads and lame, light glurp which tend to permeate the show. He became a new father to a stunningly beautiful baby girl, and his second feature film, *Duress*, was released last week to enthusiastic reviews. He took some time out from his, dare I say, monumentally busy schedule to answer a few questions for Athens Plus.

1. You have worked with many producers and songwriters on your cds and albums. How involved are you in post-production treatments of the songs: mixing, effects, choice of sound dynamics, etc.

My knowledge around music has evolved very much after 20 albums. I know what I want when I am in the studio and I am very lucky that I have very inspired collaborators, such as Dimitris Kontopoulos, who are able apart from writing very good songs, to enhance them even more in post production.

2. Has becoming a new father had any effect on the material you choose to record, projects you choose to be involved with, etc.

Of course! Many of my songs touch my 'father' chords. Becoming a father has further enriched my emotions and broadened my perspective. All my choices go through a filter, since my objective is always to take up new challenges that take me a step further. My first year of fatherhood, was full of exciting challenges: live performances, my second participation at Eurovision song contest, my concert at Kallimarmaro stadium, my first American film 'Duress' opening to the critics and audiences.. I cannot complain!

3. If you were going to make a CD of only cover material, could you please tell me a few songs you would wish to record and why.

My favorite artists are without any second thought, Elvis and the Beatles. 'Suspicious minds' is a song that I always perform in my concerts and my fans have re-discovered it. There are many songs that I like, especially ballads, and you gave me a great idea to make such an album!

5. In your new movie, Duress, you play a very charming, handsome psychotic murderer. What were the most difficult aspects of playing such a character, as you appear to be one of the most cheerful, well-adjusted people in the world.

My role in Duress is completely opposite to who I am and what I represent, and this was a great acting challenge for me. I consider myself very lucky to perform such a role, because it gave me the opportunity to utterly change and 'spoil' my image, proving that I have serious intentions as an actor.

7. In the next few years do you see yourself putting more emphasis on your acting career, singing career or television work like X-factor and other Greek programs?

I love to try new things and evolve through them. Acting was a lifelong dream that I decided to seriously pursue some years ago. I went to Los Angeles for acting classes with one of the most prominent acting teachers, Howard Fine. For 4 years, I was absent from the Athenian nightlife, because I wanted to focus on acting. Now, after Duress, I am preparing a new Greek film, a romantic comedy, and simultaneously I am rehearsing for my live performances at THE S CLUB, as my fans named it, presenting X-Factor as well and planning a new music album due out this spring. I think that this creative chaos is a challenge by itself, but I really love it! I cannot answer for sure what will I do next year, and I 'm not sure if I ever get to do one thing at a time, I just want to feel excited with my career and never being bored.

8. Do you have any offers/plans to play in other Hollywood or Greek feature films in the near future?

I have read several scripts both for American and Greek productions, but I have not decided anything yet. As I told you, I am planning a new Greek film, a romantic comedy this time. I aim at making diverse films, so after a drama and a psychological thriller, I feel that a romantic comedy is an interesting change.

9. When you watch current Hollywood film releases, with which actors/actresses do you feel an immediate, psychological connection?

It's not about a connection but great admiration.. Marlon Brando, Meryl Streep, Edward Norton are acting legends for me and I 've watched all their films.

11. Many congratulations on becoming a new father. In the future, as your daughter Anastasia grows up, should she have interest in pursuing a musical career, would you encourage her to follow this career path or suggest she try something more stable and low profile?

She will be free to choose whatever she wants, according to her talent and will. I don't want ever to suppress her desire and I am very lucky that my parents understood me and enhanced my artistic interests, helping me become who I am today.

12. Should you have an opportunity to work with Hollywood film directors in the future, could you tell me a few with whom you'd personally like to work? Could you tell me a few directors, past or present, European or American that you admire?

There are too many. My ambition and dream is to collaborate with people that will teach me new things and convey their knowledge and experience. That's my goal in general, and especially in my acting career where I feel that there's a lot more to learn.

13. Which charities and philanthropic organizations are you active in? Which ones do you believe, in a general sense, need more public awareness?

I am an active citizen, conscious about all the social issues of our times. I always try to help people in need and support causes that I believe. For instance, in July I made an extraordinary concert at Kallimarmaro stadium dedicated to the protection of the environment. With a striking huge audience, we altogether united our voices for the environment. I am very proud for this concert! I am also dedicated to ELPIDA foundation, for children with cancer. As a Messenger of ELPIDA (hope in English) I support the Foundation through all my activities, raising funds and awareness for its work. I am very happy that the first Children's Oncology Hospital in Greece is almost ready and will open in May to serve the needs of the children and their families. I want to participate in such significant projects with true and generous results for people in need.

14. The American writer Henry Miller once said that "French meals are delicious but taste like they were made by engineers. Greek food tastes like it was prepared by an older woman with large arms and a slight moustache. "You speak French and have worked with French artists. Do you agree with Henry Miller's opinion about the different cuisines and would you prefer to eat a Greek meal or a French meal?

I am a culinary lover and a big fan of the French cuisine, but the Greek cuisine is for me the best in the world. Not only for its tradition and essence but also for the great pure ingredients we use, which are truly unique.

15. Do you have any favorite international fashion designers at the moment? Favorite international bands/singers at the moment?

Although I am a casual wear fan, I love Dolce&Gabbana suits. There are many new singers I like but currently I 'm stuck with Kings of Leon.

Duress-Box Insert

Duress: A cunningly wise move for the Sakis-man

After his starring role in the 2007 film *Alter Ego*, where he played the edgy pop-rock star Stefanos, he needed to branch out a bit, but not too much, to display his acting chops to Hollywood and the general public. So, let's be honest guys, it's not that difficult for a real life pop star to portray a pop star in a movie: Prince did it in *Purple Rain*, ditto Mick Jagger in *Performance*, and the list goes on. Sakis's role in the new film *Duress* is a perfect vehicle to showcase his developing thespian skills without stretching his talent over-the-top or giving him over-exposure with too much air time.

The movie is a nice, tight, psychological thriller where he plays a handsome, well-spoken yet completely homicidal, lad insane. He gets to be simultaneously twitchy and obsessive, yet understated and cool. This complex, bipolar compound image is pretty much what most high-visibility trendy pop singers try to project to their audiences when performing live. However, it's hard as hell to do it on a film director's command, and even more difficult to make it seem genuine on the celluloid. Sakis, remarkably, makes it look easy and really shines in this film as the compulsive, yet cosmetically perfect, unrepentant murderer. Most critics are giving the film a more than positive review and I'm in complete agreement with their kudos. The Sakis-man deserves merited plaudits for his work.