

February 15, 2009

Hi Guys, here's the Tamta review. Her agency said they'll e-mail us some high-quality photos from the current show on Monday. I love Russian ladies. Talk soon, Big P

Tamta
Botanikos Club, Athens
February 14, 2009

Tamta: Little Miss Dynamite!

The proverb "good things come in little packages" exists, in some form or another, in practically every culture in the world. The spaghetti-thin, Georgian-born, pop-singer Tamta, who has captured and held the admiration of hordes of Greek youth, is testimony to this sage epithet. It is truly a rare phenomenon when a foreign singer can break-into, and stay in the Greek pop-music market. Tamta has not only broken the glass seal, but thrived on the pop charts. Her third, full-length CD, is set for release in mid-spring, and plans for a summer tour of mainland Greece and popular islands is currently being planned. She promotes, and is the advertising vehicle, for well-known companies who make chocolate candy and youth-oriented, trendy athletic shoes. Her current music program at the Botanikos club, where she supports co-headliners Natasha Theodoridou and Yiorgos Mazonakis, is pulling crowds in hand-over-fist. I had a chance to speak with Tamta in her dressing room at the club before and after her performance. It was possibly the most relaxed, unpretentious and genuine conversation I've had with a professional person in the last ten years or so.

The dressing room itself is worth an entire news article. Instead of hardback folding metal chairs, hot studio lights and snippy, personal handlers one sees multi-colored bean bag chairs, scented candles, friends popping in and out of the room, and your choice of herbal teas and soft drinks are available from the designated beverage area. But make no mistake, the situation is both professional and cool. Tamta and her crew have found the subtle space between having fun and getting the job done right. They are all relaxed pros who know their jobs inside and out.

On the subjects of song material and personal image, Tamta is straight-forward about her input to the total presentation of her work. "Management gives me the songs they think will work," she pensively says, "but I have final approval of the material. I have to choose things carefully and I've rejected many pieces they've sent." On the subject of image, she says that she uses her own sense of style to create costumes and looks, but also uses a personal stylist to suggest things, make purchases and add finishing touches. And, truth be told, I've never seen Tamta jump on a popular fashion bandwagon, ever. Her look is always completely individual and treads the middle ground between youth-chic and playful sophistication. Musically, we can expect the new CD, which is yet untitled, to be melodic pop, but with a slightly more rock edge to it than her previous work. "We worked since September on the CD," she told me, "it will have two songs in English and the first single, 'Koita me' (Look at Me) is currently available for download." Her

CDs have always delivered fun, danceable, instantly likeable pop tunes, but live performance is where Tamta really shines.

Do not, I repeat, do not miss her show, and especially the opening song, "Se Orion Aresei" at the Botanikos club. She rises from the floor on a hydraulic platform, like a post-modern Botticelli's Venus, to greet the crowd. Dressed in an off-white, micro-mini skirt, thigh-high go-go boots and white chiffon top, she stalks the stage like a cross between Jessica Rabbit and Paul Stanley of the rock super-group, KISS. Her waist-length blonde hair is a flash of pop/rock style and Kabuki-dancer visual stir-fry to the beholder. The half-hour set is one of the evening's tastiest nuggets from a full-program of really excellent vocalists. "I choose the songs for the live show," she informed me, "there I have full control of the material." Indeed, her set ranges from several of her own FM hits, to standard Greek nightclub covers. However, the set highlight is a drop-dead, curl-your-toes version of Freddie Mercury/Queen's "The Show Must go on." How so much voice can come out of such a delicate frame is something only God himself understands. You have to see it to believe it.

Singers like Tamta and the Greek-American songstress Kalomira are living proof that if foreign-born, resident performers are given a chance in the Greek markets, that multi-culturalism can actually work and thrive in our country. Pop music is an underused exchange vehicle that can, if allowed, be a remarkably useful tool in the areas of shared global economy, international diplomacy, and cultural understanding. We're lucky monkeys, whether we understand it or not, to have Tamta here on our radio, TV and in the popular nightclubs. I sincerely hope we'll have more artists like her in Greece in the near future.