

LAURELL

SINGER-SONGWRITER

FULL BIOGRAPHY

*“You think I’m crazy, being your lady.
It’s a full time job and you don’t pay me.
Cut me some slack, I’ve got your back.
Don’t you be treating me like that...”*

The sound of the Caribbean is now heard everywhere – via streaming and shared platforms, as well as in clubs and on radio stations worldwide. The current term for it is “Tropical Pop,” and even Ed Sheeran and Justin Bieber are doing it. The rhythms and melodies are irresistible, and some artists are blessed with them from birth.

Like Rihanna, Laurell didn’t have to search far for inspiration. The twenty-five-year-old singer grew up in a part of West London that’s renowned for its cultural diversity. She’s lived and studied amongst people of different nations, faiths and customs from childhood; and her music reflects this same inclusive worldview as she continues to draw upon her Caribbean heritage and reaches out to an international audience.

“My roots are there,” she says. “My father is from Grenada and my mother is Jamaican so I grew up immersed in the music and culture of the Caribbean. I heard a lot of funk and Acid Jazz through them and then I inherited a heavy reggae influence from my mum, who used to play Dennis Brown, Gregory Isaacs and Luciano... you name it. I heard everything from hardcore dancehall to Bob Marley so I was lucky to have that experience.”

Laurell excelled at music in school and attended Hammersmith College in central London, where she studied composition and performance. Her time there proved inspiring and especially from the direction from her teacher, who liked heavy metal, recognized her versatility and encouraged her to interact with musicians from other genres.

“I was the R & B singer in the class who also liked pop and reggae yet, he would put me with other rockers and sometimes a jazz band. I took part in jam sessions, and that’s when I began to understand what improvisation was all about. It was amazing! I felt like a kid in a candy shop. I wasn’t just listening to different kinds of music – I was actually singing with people who specialized in them.”

Her musical tastes were already diverse, and encompassed artists old and new such as India Arie, Fela Kuti, Tina Turner and Beyonce, whom she credits with being a major influence.

“I really admire artists who have strong presence, and who have some depth in their music,” she points out, “but I started off singing other people’s songs and had friends writing things for me before realizing that I actually had a lot to say for myself. I’d been thinking there was a special formula that allowed you to write, but then discovered I’m someone who can go in the studio and just write from whatever comes to mind, because I’m a vibes person. I live in the moment and how I’m feeling is what I’m going to write about.”

This is undoubtedly why her music sounds so genuine and unfettered. There’s a lot of personal expression in her songs and yet it took a while for that confidence to shine through.

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In 2015, a mutual friend introduced Laurell to producer Clifton “Specialist” Dillon, who was in London working on tracks with Jamaican singer OMI, whose latest single Cheerleader was at No. 1 in the UK and also many other countries around the world. Laurell’s musicality captured the attention of one of the Caribbean’s most successful music producers, responsible for building the careers of artists like OMI, Shabba Ranks and Lady Patra, who’d all attained international success under his guidance.

“He’s a game-changer and that was all I ever wanted. To meet someone I could join forces with, and who could help me achieve my goals. I had the vision but I needed someone who could take me to the next level.”

Citing Cheerleader as an example, Specialist encouraged her to revise her approach, to write songs that majority of people could relate to; songs that had something different about them.

“I learnt that you can write intricate lyrics but for the most part, the listener wants something very simple,” she explains. “That’s when I realized what kind of music I wanted to do. I want to make music built around a simple melody that will catch your ear straightaway, so that people can sing along with it. For example, Bob Marley’s One Love – the melody and the lyrics are so simple, and yet they mean so much. That to me is very important, because songs like those will last forever.”

Since signing with Specialist, Laurell has spent a fair amount of time in Jamaica, recording at Oufah Music studios in Kingston and Montego Bay. Creating new songs in this environment proved a revelation as to why Laurell was paired with Specialist. Her first single on the Oufah Music label was [Think About That](#) – a fun, up-tempo dancehall song released in early 2017.

“That was from one of the best studio sessions I ever had... You can really feel the energy in that song! But the most important thing for me was to feel like I belong, and being in Jamaica was amazing. I felt completely at home, and everyday brings something new and inspiring. You feel energized just by being there, and I find that music just pours out of me...”

Laurell’s follow-up single [Crazy Love](#) is another perfect expression of today’s global Caribbean sound. Perfectly timed for the summer, it has exuberance, passion, wit and intelligence, just like the singer herself, who’s already been compared to a young Alicia Keys.

She’s currently working on her debut album, which she promises will “tell stories that paint a picture of who I am and my experiences, and to blend different genres without them being confusing in any way. I want to connect with people globally, and I like to think that my music has a message that can reach people all over the world.

“As a young girl from West London it’s important to be the best that I can but then I’m very focussed, and I like to challenge myself wherever possible. It’s all about coming to a better understanding of ourselves and other people, and also what’s happening in the world around us. That’s my goal, and to express all of this musically is a dream for me.”

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