

ASHLEE SIMPSON bio

Ashlee Simpson is in a good place. She has two multi-platinum records that debuted back to back at the top of the charts, and collectively sold more than four million copies in the U.S. alone. She has two sold-out tours under her belt, a tight-knit family, a loyal fan base, and a burgeoning second career as an actress. So when it came time to create her third album, she wanted the music to represent where she was at in life.

"Life is really good right now. I'm young. I love my life and I enjoy my time off too. I wanted to celebrate all that on my next record," says Ashlee, who has been tinkering with BITTERSWEET WORLD on and off since summer 2007. "I wanted to make music people could shake their booties to and use beats for the first time. I wanted to sing fun songs. Basically, I wanted to make a party record."

And when an artist wants to get the party started, who better to call than Timbaland? The producing powerhouse, who helped shape recent smash hits by Justin Timberlake and Nelly Furtado, toiled on half of the tracks (including "Murder," "Out of My Head (Ay Ya Ya)," "Ragdoll," and "Rule Breaker") while the rest were guided by the Neptunes' Chad Hugo and critically acclaimed Ethiopian synth-hop savant Kenna.

"The room was so blessed with talent. I was very lucky to work with people who are at the top of their game. I was nervous the first time I walked into their studios, but they quickly became like protective big brothers to me and encouraged me to just go with the flow and do whatever my heart felt was right in the booth. They'd come up with beats and I'd come up with a melody. Everyone worked together and if you had an idea, you would just spit it out and see if it stuck. I knew they wouldn't let me sound stupid and that made me go for it even more. They create an easygoing, fun vibe everywhere they go."

She quickly learned that hip-hop heroes move at a different pace than pop stars. "I have never worked until 4 a.m. before. I wouldn't go in until late in the afternoon and then we'd work until the wee hours of morning if we had it in us. I started bringing a blanket with me. I got a little loopy and punchy late at night, which affected some of the songs. It was so cool for me to be able to step outside of the way I had always done it before and try new things."

The album's lead single, "Little Miss Obsessive," returns the artist to her pop/rock roots and features guest vocals from the Plain White T's Tom

Higgenson. With another track on the album, "Murder," don't let the somber title fool you. The 23-year-old has not gone gangsta.

"No, it isn't serious, based on a true story or a threat," she explains laughing. "It's a metaphor about a girl who can get away with murder because of who she is. The lyrics should be followed by an exaggerated evil laugh." She also touches on the cattiness of girls on "Hot Stuff," a coquette-ish sassiness on "Boys" and how fun it is to sometimes do the wrong thing on "Rule Breaker." She was trying "to capture that badass feeling you get sometimes after watching a movie like True Romance. You think you can take on the world and you want to color outside the lines and get a tattoo or mouth off to someone way bigger than you."

Her personal favorite is the slow jam "Never Dream Alone," because "it is a sweet emotional song that has been stripped down to piano, strings and vocals."

The old saying, "The more things change, the more they stay the same," also applies despite the fresh techniques and talent. For instance, she still lights tons of candles and brings in a few dolls to make the space more comfortable. She also wrote or co-wrote every track and the final product is a mix of ballads, radio-friendly anthems and dance floor ditties per usual.

"I never want to be handed a song to sing. I don't work that way. This is my art and it's personal. If someone else writes the song without my input, it doesn't feel honest."

Ashlee continues to cull from her own experiences or things she witnesses those around her weathering for lyrical subject matter, but says most verses aren't as literal as they have been on past singles. "Lyrically this album is a bit more abstract and quirky than my past stuff was although I'm still singing about things I've gone through or friends went through. The topics are diverse and universal so I think people will be able to fit the songs into their own lives too."

Her favorite collaborative partner is still her childhood friend/band guitarist Ray Brady. "I trust him completely. He plays on every track and is my sounding board. We sit in a corner writing and working out alternative versions to play live. He's always introducing me to new music that helps me evolve as an artist." One such act Brady brought into her life was Missing Persons and Ashlee's never been the same. "I love those strong women from the late '70s and '80s. They are strong and vulnerable simultaneously, yet they still make you want to dance. Women like Chrissie Hynde, Debbie Harry and Pat Benatar have really inspired my music for the last two years and you

will definitely be reminded of that era when you listen to the new album." Her tribute to the rock-pop goddesses who came before her stops short at fist-shaking dance moves. "There will be no synchronized choreography or fog machine on the next tour. I'm inspired by the '80s, not living them," she assures. "When it comes time to tour, I'll still experiment with different or acoustic versions of songs. I hate when I go to concerts and it's like I could've stayed home and listened to the CD and gotten the same experience. I wouldn't feel right doing that to people who shell out money to see me."

The veteran of two sold-out tours can't wait to get back on the road again. "That's my favorite part of the job. I love playing live and seeing up close and personal how your music affects other people. I love seeing the reactions on fan faces and hearing them sing along. I want them to go on this journey with me."

Her last taste of life on stage came in 2006 as she took on the lead role of Roxie Hart in London's West End production of "Chicago" to critical acclaim, and following in the footsteps of such greats as Ann Reinking who originally made the part famous on Broadway. To date, Ashlee is the youngest person to ever tackle the role of 'Roxie' and she did it with a grace and aplomb that she was invited to join the likes of Brooke Shields, Melanie Griffith, Rita Wilson, Chita Rivera, Bebe Neuwirth, Joel Grey and Reinking in a special one-night only 10th anniversary benefit performance of Chicago on Broadway. Previous credits also include the independent feature film Undiscovered about a crop of young talents in the making, and appearances on 7th Heaven, Malcolm in the Middle, and Saved By The Bell.

Now with accolades such as Billboard Artist of the Year (2004), two Teen Choice Awards, countless magazine covers and appearances and performances on shows as varied as MTV Video Music Awards, Teen Choice Awards, and the American Music Awards to her credit, and an exciting new album to look forward to, no doubt the future will continue to be bright for Ashlee Simpson. "The most important thing is that this is something I really enjoy doing," she says. "I love creating and participating in projects people can connect to."