



## Nikka Costa- BIO

“You can’t please everybody  
No, you can’t please everybody,  
No matter how hard you try.”

-- “Can’t Please Everybody”

If you’re going to make soul music -- joyful, authentic, modern yet classic soul music -- it really helps if that music is allowed to come straight from your soul.

**Pebble To A Pearl** -- the latest radiant gem by the gifted singer-songwriter and performer Nikka Costa -- is far and away her most direct and convincing musical statement yet. If this is Costa’s most pleasing album to date -- and it clearly is -- then it’s exactly because the woman singing to us so powerfully has finally found the creative freedom to first and foremost please herself.

“I’ve never felt so proud of an album,” says Costa who earned rave reviews and devoted fans around the world with her kinetic live performances and distinctively funky albums 2001’s Everybody’s Got Their Something and 2005’s Can’tneverdidnothing. “Obviously, I want people to hear the album and love it,” explains Costa. “But, when it comes down to it, I don’t care because this is a totally unfiltered expression of who I am and what I do.

**Pebble To A Pearl** is the uplifting sound of an artist unbound following a difficult period with her previous record company -- sadly, an all too common story in recent years. “This was a totally different experience and one that felt emancipating,” Costa says. “First, I got out of the old label, which was major. Now I’m just so happy not to be caught up in that big machine that’s breaking down. For a while, it felt like I was on deck of the Titanic, and I was just supposed to play the violin for myself on the ship as it was going down. I know that I was feeling that way -- and could tell the people at the company were feeling that too -- but no one could admit it. There was bullshit going down all around me, and I was extremely happy to get out of it all. Of course, then I had to figure out what the hell to do. I knew I wanted to make another record, but how?”

As **Pebble To A Pearl** demonstrates brilliantly, the answer to that big, lingering question was to do it fast, do it for yourself and do it for all the right reasons. And so it was then that Nikka Costa began recording her album on her own dime for her own new label, the wonderfully and fittingly named Go Funk Yourself Records.

After a few years of getting no shortage of frequently contradictory record company input, Costa's greatest motivation came when she realized exactly what sort of album she wanted to make.

"Before long I had an epiphany because I even reached out to other writers, and it wasn't working," Costa explains. "I thought maybe I'm not being specific enough about what I want. Finally, I just went with my gut instinct. Keep it up, soulful, happy and real. I don't want to do anything but that. I don't want to try to accommodate what I think other people want. So I was super clear to myself and from that moment, everything flowed."

Costa and Justin Mitchell Stanley, the record's producer, made up what she calls "our dream band" including the great James Gadson on drums, Shawn Davis on bass, James Poyser and Keefus Green on keyboards, Jason Falkner and Chris Bruce on guitars.

"We decided to get back to the roots of recording. We all set up in one room and communicated with each other rather than playing to something that had already been laid down to tape. So in five days we had fifteen songs down. Leave the mistakes and keep the vibe," Costa recalls. "We completed the whole album in basically three weeks. I'm so excited in a way I haven't been in a long time. It feels like so much has come together right this time and I think it's because I'm not trying to prove anything anymore."

That sort of assurance is on display throughout the new album, from the infectious opener "Stuck To You," to the clearly autobiographical "Can't Please Everybody", the cheeky humor of "Love to Love You Less" to the concluding, politically charged "Bullets In The Sky".

**Pebble To A Pearl** is clearly a breakthrough effort from a woman who literally grew up in music. Her father was legendary producer, conductor and arranger Don Costa has a profound influence on her life though he suddenly passed away when Nikka was ten years old. By that point, Costa was already a successful recording artist. At eight years old, Nikka released her first album, with her version of "Out Here On My Own" from Fame. This was the beginning of many albums and tours throughout Europe, South America, Australia, and more, which led to a nomination for ARIA Breakthrough Artist in 1996, Best Female Artist in 1997, and the MTV Best New artist in 2001.

Now with her latest album, Costa feels like a whole new artist in the best possible way. "Everything seems based on fear at the big labels today, and you can't get music made like that. You can't do anything like that. This was the opposite of that."

Ironically, after Costa, Stanley and their friends recorded **Pebble To A Pearl**, they were approached about a new and more productive record company relationship. "We were going to put it out ourselves solely through Go Funk Yourself Records," Costa explains. "Then Concord got word of it and that we were doing it ourselves and approached us about going through the recently relaunched Stax Records. So we invited them into the studio and played them a few things and they were like, 'We have to have this.' And it was so nice to hear enthusiasm coming from a company based on what we were doing, not based on what we could be doing."

For a lifelong soul music lover like Costa, making her album and now having it affiliated with the legendary Stax Records, whose roster includes some of soul music most important artists such as Otis Redding and Isaac Hayes, is the fulfillment of a dream. “How perfect is that?” Costa says with a huge, winning smile. “Stax is the epitome of what I’m about – that was the original, integrated soul music. That’s the vibe that moved me about soul music when I was twelve, and it moves me still.”

After playing some warm up dates in the summer, she says that when **Pebble To A Pearl** comes out in September, she wants to hit the road hard. “I want to get on the bus and just go for it. Playing live is when it all comes together, it’s my thing - the part I love the most.”

Look forward to Nikka Costa pleasing crowds -- and herself -- in a venue near you.