

Star Academy 2008's

Lara Scandar

About a girl

Lara Scandar of Star Academy 2008 announced the launch of her debut solo album "About a Girl" at an exclusive album launch party held at MyBar in Beirut. The debut album, produced by Jean-Marie Riachi, is an eleven track album featuring a full spectrum of genres. Lara isn't only a top performance artist; she also uses this album to show off her song writing talents. She wrote the lyrics of "See the beauty", "Egypt" and "My Friend" in the album. The Gate met Lara Scandar prior to her performance at the Beirut Souks where she presented her albums to a wide audience of fans from all ages and had this exclusive interview



Why did you choose Beirut to launch your album from?

Part of me is Lebanese actually. Of course I would have loved to launch my album from Egypt first. Usually I open my tour there and then close it in Lebanon. These are the most two countries that mean something to me. This time, given the situation, I decided to open my tour from Lebanon and close it in Egypt.

Why does Beirut mean so much to you? Is it because of your experience in Star Academy? Or was it already that way before?

No it's because I'm part Lebanese so my roots are here too and I do have some different kind of love for this country.

In the clips and songs you perform as well as in the way you manage your events, there seems to be a certain benchmark you're trying to set. What is it?

I've been very blessed first of all to have a really good team behind me. Everything we're doing is on an international standard whether it's the production of the song or the music video. It's not because of foreign producers or directors that these are good. We have so many talented people in the Middle East. It's actually about the quality of their work. My main producer anyway is Lebanese and my team is mostly Lebanese and Egyptian. Even the people here work on international standards and have high goals for themselves and myself.

Who are you targeting in the kind of songs you're performing?

My fan base is mostly youth. They are my main target, but I've been blessed with fans from all ages and all backgrounds and all walks of life and all tastes of music so I don't really have a target that I'm aiming for. My album has different types of songs and I'm offering this album to everyone who's willing to listen and find something they like.

You think youth are getting more attracted to English songs?

When I first came out of Star Academy, I got a lot of heat because I didn't sing in Arabic in the Middle East. What I was

afraid of was that my only fan base would be people who speak English or French but surprisingly enough, most of my fans are Arabs who don't speak a word of either but they listen to English music. It's just like Michael Jackson, why was he so big in the Middle East? No-one understood a word of what he's saying. They just loved his music and they loved his performances. So music is really international. I listen to a lot of songs that I don't understand what they mean but it's the music that speaks to me not the lyrics.

Your song "chains" aimed to be "empowering for women" as you said in one of your interviews. Do you have a certain message in your new album?

You know what? All the songs in the album that have anything to do with love, even "No More" which is probably the most song where the girl lets down her guy but she still has that confidence and pride, I think that's the message I tried to give it: You have to be strong but letting your guy down every once in a while isn't wrong. I'm the type of person that likes to stay strong but I like to cry every once in a while. I think that's important but especially in the Middle East and especially in relationships, a woman or a girl should see herself as equal to the person in front of her and just like she respects the people around her, the people around her shall respect her the same. You give what you get.

How much do you encourage talented youth today to join the field you joined and follow the path you followed?

It's not something that I would say easy and just go into it. I am a big fan of following your dreams but I think that you should enter the field with a good group on the ground. Your feet should also really be on the ground. I am very lucky to be blessed with family and friends that until now and no matter what happens, still know how to put my feet back on the ground. I encourage everyone to follow their dreams but just not lose sight of who they are. Once you do that, you can consider yourself over.

Do you believe you can become an international star one day? If not, why not? What is it that we lack in this part of the world?

I feel like the music that I sing could be hopefully one day appreciated abroad, maybe more than here. Who sings English and wouldn't want to go abroad and succeed? But my target now is the Middle East for different reasons mainly because I'm an Arab, I'm Egyptian, I'm Lebanese and I'm proud of that. And I want to open the door for something new. If it works out here then thank God for that and if it didn't work then at least I tried.

Did any international producers spot your talent and try to import you somewhere else?

Things come on time... I worked with talented producers in New York for two of my songs and they are very talented and we'll have some more work to come with them. I'm really happy with that.

What kind of hardships did you face so far in your career? Who do you blame for what and who do you thank for what?

I don't blame anyone for anything I feel that if you are in this industry you have to accept the good and the bad. And in life even if you're just a regular person and not in the spotlight people are never going to always love you. People love you and people hate you and it all depends on you and the concentration you put. If you concentrate on the people that love you, you'll do well. If you concentrate on the people that hate you then that's it. But I don't blame anyone I just feel that the hardships that I faced are just, you know, people kind of set an image and an idea of you and they decide not to change it. But it's up to you to show them, to prove to yourself and to them that you can do better than what they think you can do.

Now that you've reached a place you were dreaming to reach years ago. What's your next dream today?

It's to live the moment and appreciate every single second. Nothing more nothing less.