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WE

West Indian Entertainment & Life
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TANISHA SCOTT

Jamaican Canadian
Dancer/Choreographer
living out a dream

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Kassav' (Dominica)
Mr Dale (Barbados)

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dancer, choreographer and aspiring actress

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Everybody wants to be a star. They work hard, train hard, dress hard, and try diligently to fit the image and persona of a celebrity. For some it takes years of sacrifice, unfailing commitment, and deliberately placing themselves in the right place at the right time. For others, like Jamaican-Canadian choreographer Tanisha Scott, her appeal is multi-faceted, and the fame is a natural result.

You might have seen Scott live on stage with dancehall artist Sean Paul, who she is currently touring with as a dancer, and choreographer of his show. You have definitely seen the results of her training as R&B artist Beyoncé moves her waistline with Caribbean flair in the "Upgrade You" video. You've also seen her performing in videos with artists from Ne-yo to Beanie Man, or take it back a few years and you'll remember Scott "shaking it fast" with Mystikal and "riding" down Toronto streets with Choclair. She performed with the ever-hype Do Dat dance crew, and those from Toronto's old school of partying will remember her Bogleing and Peppersed-ing back at the Spectrum nightclub in the 90's, when dancehall was defining itself, and fans worldwide were exploring this relatively new aspect of reggae music.

Scott realizes that dancehall is in her veins, and despite the international touring, the diverse dance movements from ballet to hip-hop that she has immersed herself in, and the unique cultures she has had the privilege of experiencing first-hand, she knows that you cannot ignore your natural tendencies. She is a true Jamaican at heart, and one of the experts in the reggae movement of our time.

She was able to take individuals like Beyoncé, and Sean Paul's all-American dancers, to expertly move like true yardies; she praises dancehall for being able to transcend culture, race, and even geographic barriers.

"It's amazing to see how people have adapted the culture," said Scott. "From Alicia Keys to the Pussycat Dolls, everyone wants to experience dancehall. I would love



to see it get to the point where it's taught at Julliard and truly respected as a form of dance."

But with or without the official acceptance of dancehall's soulful movements, Toronto-born Scott is always open to learning, and perfecting her skill in any style. As a child, she would absorb the lessons learned by her friends at their own ballet or jazz classes, and managed to internalize the movements just the same. She has reached this level of success without formal training; however her dedication to learning and practicing has made her as efficient and authentic as her counterparts.

"You might have a gift for something, but you still need to practice anything you do," Scott said. "I practiced my butt off before I went to university, going out and dancing all the time, any and everywhere that I could. Also, Luther Brown taught me how to learn routines. I was always a great freestyler, but he taught me the technical aspects of dance through rigorous rehearsals; Luther always had us [Do Dat] training and learning."

With dreams of dancing professionally still on the horizon, Scott was focused, and earned her Bachelor's degree at the University of Windsor. While her studies did not translate directly to the dance floor, the lessons learned while pursuing her post-secondary education, have continued to help her on her career path.

"When I first moved to New York, I was there by myself. The culture is different, the people are different; my experience in Windsor definitely prepared me for that. The independence, being away from home, time management, and growing into my own woman," said Scott.

Stopping off briefly in Toronto after the European stretch of Sean Paul's tour, Scott was prepared to leave town again to continue touring. While she's able to come back home for special occasions and holidays, Scott spends a lot of time on the road, and in New York where she currently resides. She's living every young girl's fantasy, having fun on stage, tour-

ing with the greatest acts of our time, working out, practicing, and ensuring that she stays at the top of her game.

"The only moment it doesn't feel like work is when I'm on the stage," said Scott, who admits that while the lifestyle of a dancer/choreographer might contain elements of fantasy, there is a lot of preparation that goes on behind the scenes.

While everyone wants to mingle with the rich and famous, Scott feels that people often underestimate the effort it takes to sustain oneself in the entertainment industry: the 8-hour rehearsals, learning intricate routines in short periods of time, and sometimes being prepared to change those routines at the last minute to accommodate the headlining artists.

Top recording artists continuously seek her guidance, not only because of her obvious talent and dancehall flavour, but also because of her personality and the reputation she has developed as being a great person to work with, and work for. She encourages her dancers to be themselves, and incorporates aspects of their personal style into her routines that are hot enough for BET and Much Vibe, sexy enough to capture the interest of men, and classy enough to gain the respect of female viewers.

Scott confessed that Sean Paul is the only person she will dance for, as she continues to choreograph, and pursue a career in acting (look out for her as Deandra, in the upcoming step-dancing movie, "How She Move" also featuring Keyshia Cole).

She can hold her own with the biggest of celebrities or the girl-next-door in Toronto, all without changing her style or forgetting who she is - and who she has always been. This quality in itself holds a sense of mystique in an industry of illusions, financial motivation, and cultural disregard. While everyone strives to be a star, only some, like Scott, can naturally possess the necessary elements to maintain that status.

"This is my dream," she said. "I'm really living out my dream."