

Maria Stavropoulou

I DID IT MY WAY

In between putting the final touches to her "debut" solo album and raising the roof with her powerhouse scattin' every Friday and Saturday night at the Cypriot Club, all the while juggling her marital and motherly duties, Maria Stavropoulou, once the of the local Greek scene, now a fully-fledged "belter" of a singer on her own right, manages to squeeze in an interview with "O Kosmos" newspaper.

WORDS BY SAVVAS LIMNATITIS

Women! They can never be on time, can they? I am sitting at Kingsgrove's Giorgio Café, on a cold, summer Sydney morning, nervously sipping on my frappe, but my patience is running thin. I am here to catch up with Maria Stavropoulou (even to an old rock aficionado like myself, unquestionably the owner of the most "ferocious" vocal chords of the local Greek music scene) but she is running late. At least to my standards, she is. Before I ponder on whether to offer a diagnosis of an acute "diva syndrome", my phone buzzes. It's a message from Stavropoulou herself: "Sorry, I fell asleep. I'll be there shortly". Here we go...

Fifteen minutes later, Maria Stavropoulou rocks up, a big smile on her face. But big as it may be, her smile does little in the way of hiding the first signs of an uninvited cold, which I have no doubts was the reason for her being late. "I'm sorry to be late" she offers sincerely, "but I think I am coming down with the flu". Apologies accepted we move on, Spyropoulou bravely trooping on, candidly answering whatever question I might through in her direction, her invigorating zest for life working its magic on my nerves. And let's face it: it does not take a genius to work out my interlocutor is - indeed- a fighter.

In her shoes, a less strong person would have either collapsed or jumped head first into the narcissistic world of the Greek showbiz world. With a big bad wolf lurking behind every corner with a squillion of upstarts ready

to swoop at the opposition, Stavropoulou managed to pull through unscathed, shielded as she was by her child-like innocence.

During our conversation, as she recalls the years spend in Greece chasing the ever evading dream of hitting the big time, offering one story after another - some outrageously funny, most outright horrible- another part of Spyropoulou shines through: that of the perpetual optimist. Rather than wallowing in sorrow (even when wholly justified, drowning in one's tears is basically akin to laceration), Maria Spyropoulou takes it all on the chin, finding excuse after excuse for everyone that ever did her wrong, choosing instead to see the past as a great learning curve. "Life is what you make it" she offers. And she is happy with the way hers turned out to be.

You started singing at the tender age of 16.

No, I was actually 10. I remember that every time my parents took me to a dance, I would walk up to the band and ask them if I could sing a song. They would all say yes, until one day "Ta Paidia tou Aigaiou" asked me if I wanted to join them. At 12 I was working at bouzoukia and by the time I turned 14 I was a fully professional singer. This was in early 90s.

You must have had a different childhood to other kids your age.

If I was to do it again, I wouldn't have



I was only a pure, little Greek Australian girl, but I had to learn quickly about how people in Greece thought and behaved, their innuendos and all that stuff. But at the same time, because I was so innocent, they liked me. So I never had any problems and many people helped me

