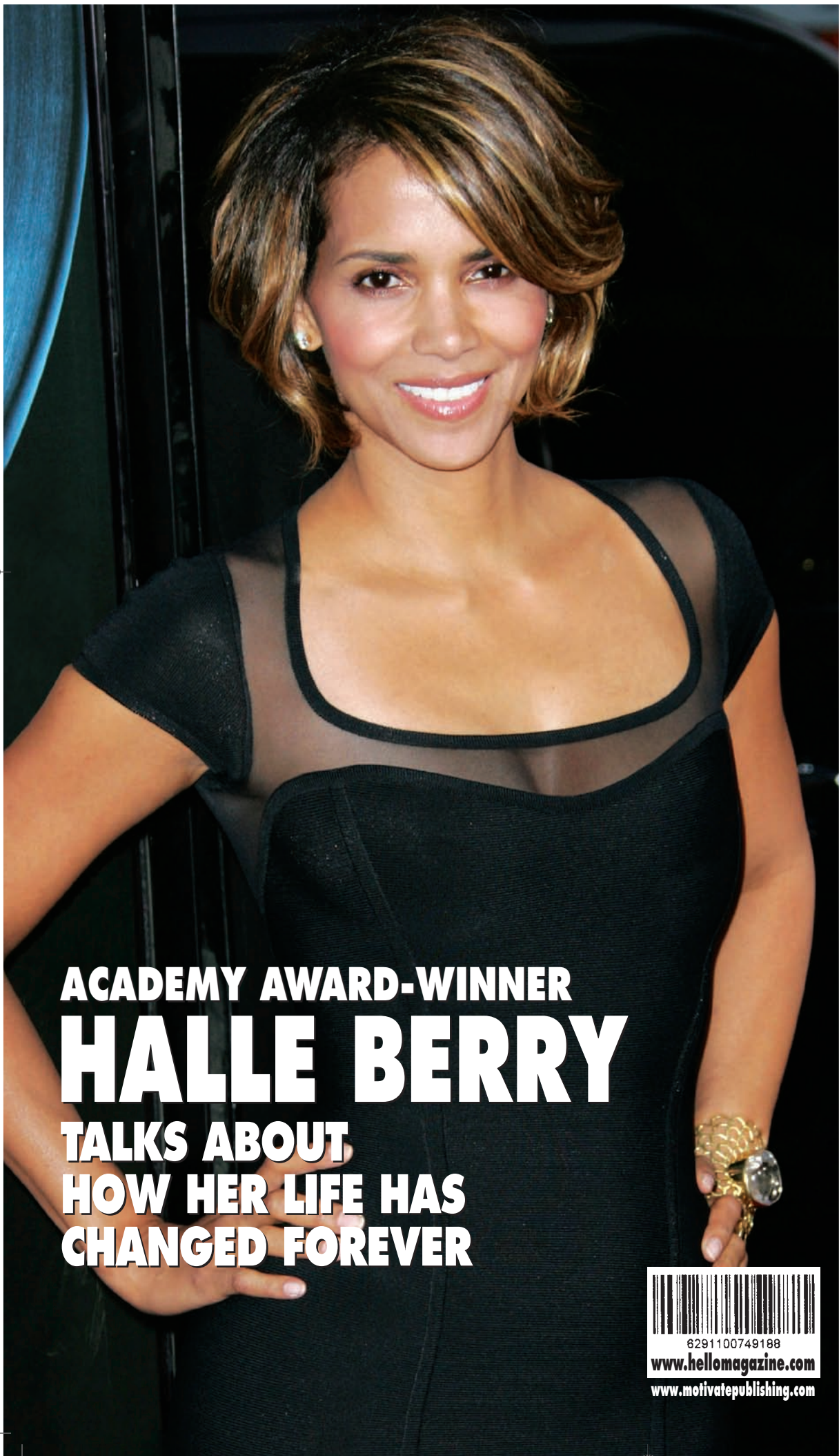


HELLO!

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SWEDISH-LEBANESE SINGER

THERÉSE NEAIMÉ

**TALKS HOLLYWOOD,
HER MUSIC CAREER AND REVEALS HER
PASSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST**



'I always liked to be on stage. I started out as a dancer at an early age, I think I danced before I could walk'

Swedish-Lebanese songstress Therése Neaimé, is a familiar face in the Emirates performing in both Dubai and Abu Dhabi as a special guest.

Recently she sang at the What's On Awards in Abu Dhabi and performed in Dubai alongside international superstar and former Jackson Five member, Jermaine Jackson, and trio Divas for Dinner at the newly-opened Dubai Palladium in Dubai Media City. Based in Sweden, her own label is distributed internationally by Universal Music.

Over recent years Therése has built a loyal audience in her homeland and the region surrounding her father's ancestral country of Lebanon through several infectious singles including *Livin'*, *Everything* and *How Could I*—the music video was shot in Dubai in 2008. Therése's first single *Colour of Love* became a huge hit in her home country of Sweden, its follow-up single *The Future* was even bigger, playing on over 29 stations. Her fourth single, *Not Easy*, went straight to number one on the Swedish chart. Therése's new hit single *All I Think About Is You*, which she performed at the What's On Awards last month in Dubai, is due for release this week. The singer-songwriter has spent the last several months working intensely on her second album, recording with international producers in studios in Stockholm, Los Angeles and Berlin. With her soaring, emotional voice and colourful mix of pop and rock, Therése has become popular with audiences around the world.

She began her singing career at the age of 15 with the Stockholm East Gospel Choir and later toured the world as a backing singer and dancer with several international artists. She was signed in 2003 as one of five songwriters in top international producer Jorgen Elofsson's team. Jorgen's artists have included everyone from Britney Spears and Kelly Clarkson. Therése began collaborating with Mattias Venge who was one of Il Divo's producers. The two co-wrote three tracks on the album *Livin'*, including the hits *Keep It Up*, *The Future* and *Here to Stay*, which Mattias also produced. After her performance in Dubai, Therése and her Neaimé Band jetted to Stockholm to open for Simply Red. This was Therése's third performance with the legendary British band after concerts in Cyprus and Spain during the summer of 2008.

She took time out from her busy schedule to sit down with HELLO! to chat about her big move to Hollywood and her plans for the future.



Therése, you were a dancer for many years, even performing on the US dance show *Soul Train*. How did you become a singer?

"I always liked to be on stage. I started out as a dancer at an early age, I think I danced before I could walk. My singing didn't start until I was around 16 years old, when I joined the Gospel Choir. The big leap though came in 1999 when I moved to Hollywood. This is where I started to write my own songs and play live with my eight piece band, Neaimé."

You left Sweden in 1999 and moved to LA and studied at the Musicians Institute in Hollywood, how do you think this helped you develop as an all round performer?

"It was hard moving to Hollywood and leaving Sweden but I felt it was the right thing to do. I was already touring as a dancer, but I wanted to sing. It was tough breaking into Hollywood but this prepares you and makes you a stronger performer. I think the key is not to think how hard something is, but to just focus on your goals. It was a challenge. I knew how to take advantage of school. I used it 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I put together my band, I wrote music, and developed my voice."

What advice would you give aspiring singers?

"Don't put any limits to what you can achieve and you will be successful. I believe in positive thinking."

Do you see yourself as an inspiration to others?

"Yes, I hope so. I believe that I am an

inspiration to others simply because I'm showing them that it is possible to have a dream and achieve it. I believe that I have proven with hard work and determination anything is possible if you are willing to work for it."

You write your own songs, where do you draw your inspiration from?

"It comes from living every day. Each song is a story. Whether it is about relationships, family, work or challenges we face in life. An album is a story about your life."

After the success of your first album, expectations are high for your new material, does that add extra pressure?

"I don't think about that or how hard it is or expectations people have of me. I think that is a strength, I just keep going and during this time my voice develops along with my song writing. Everything is taken to the next level and I hope that people feel that this album is from the heart. We are not trying to do it in one particular way because we know it works. Every song develops naturally from where I was emotionally when I wrote it. That is why I think my first album did so well. We were not trying to produce something that would fit a particular market."

Do you believe this attitude has affected your success on an international level?

"Absolutely. I was living in LA, but I have very strong influences from Sweden and Lebanon. It adds flavour to the album. Some songs have Middle Eastern flavour and some songs have a funky R&B



'The band and I have so much fun opening for Simply Red. The fans are so welcoming and friendly'

The singer, who is a regular in the Middle East, has performed regularly with Mick Hucknall and Simply Red (above)

flavour while others are more singer-song-writer material. I did very well in Sweden and in the Middle East, so all the international influences come together and work really well."

Can you tell me about your latest album. *All I Think About Is You* being released worldwide this week? What can fans expect?

"Fans can expect even more of an international flavour. I am now working on the production side so I have taken it to another level and I'm trying to expand my skills. I recorded some tracks in Los Angeles and I am working with some great producers in Berlin and Sweden. I am very fortunate to work with so many talented people. I am working in three very different places, the US, Sweden and the Middle East, yet, I feel very connected to them all."

You recently performed for the third time with British band Simply Red, what was it like working with them again?

"It is just wonderful. The band and I have so much fun opening for Simply Red. The fans are so welcoming and friendly. It is also great exposure for us and we are very grateful to work with open for them for a third time. It shows that fans have enjoyed our music, which is all I could ask for." **H**

TEXT BY CINDY L. BAILEY
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