



THIS IS CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA





STEVIE RAE

A Conversation with Stevie Rae Stephens

By Ana L. Roman photos by Ash Prasad

With deep wishes, epic hopes, and even bigger dreams, Stevie Rae Stephens speaks with 65° Magazine on her life's journey into music.

What was your experience like with American Idol?

American Idol was a 6-month process, starting in June 2012, just before my senior year of college, and ending in December 2012. I was faced with many challenges and obstacles that ultimately left me more knowledgeable of the entertainment industry and more appreciative of what I already had. During my journey on *American Idol: Season 12*, I passed through 5-6 different rounds of judging, from the first cattle call at Dodger Stadium with 10,000 people to the top 75 contestants of the group rounds in Hollywood. Though I was cut in Hollywood, I walked off that stage with a smile on my face because I got to be in the same room as 75 of the country's best singers and was still going to be able to graduate college and go on to produce my first album, *Let Me Go*.

Who are your biggest influences?

Some of my biggest influences include Sara Bareilles, Ryan Tedder, Barcelona, and Barbra Streisand, to name a few. As a power ballad singer/songwriter, I relate to artists such as Sara, Regina Spektor, Anna Nalick, and Pink. As a storyteller, I find my work resembling Barcelona, Jason Mraz, and Ryan Tedder of OneRepublic. Of course, Barbra, Kelly Clarkson, Christina Aguilera, and Whitney Houston are all vocal idols for my singing.

What are some of the hardships you face as an artist?

The biggest hardship I face as an artist is affording the time to grow as a songwriter. Songwriting is a muscle that becomes lethargic and slower the less you use it. To date, I let some jobs go in the hopes that spending more time on music and performance would put me in a better position to work in that field. After releasing *BURN*, I found that doors were opening for me left and right. And even though I am no longer working in manual labor as often, I still maintain five part-time jobs

that I juggle along with jujutsu, dance, and gigging.

Tell us about your video.

My upcoming music video, "Looks So Good," is due for release in the new year and will be in shooting in January. I have been planning this video since early July and gaining more and more momentum as the months have passed. "Looks So Good" is a collaboration between The Dance Center and Cairn Studios from Burbank, CA. The Dance Center has provided five beautiful and talented young women who will be dancing in the video. Though this song is very different than my first single, "BURN," which aimed at raising awareness of domestic violence, "Looks So Good" aims to spread a message of personal strength, self-love, and empowerment through the understanding that the greatest loves are those that do not complete us, but rather remind us of our completeness. I portray this idea through metaphors and allusions of wearing love, happiness, and strength like clothing, makeup, and shoes. I am very excited about this next step in my career! I am hosting an ongoing crowdfunding site for the video at www.gofundme.com/lookssogood2016, until the end of December, in an effort to make this video the best it can be and promote more than just my own talents and career, but of everyone who partakes.

What are your goals and wishes as a musician?

My ultimate goal is to be happy. I don't want to settle for anything less than what I love doing—singing, performing, and writing. Music has been my entire life for the last 20 years, and I still can't get enough of it. I was born to be a musician, and everything I have ever done has been in pursuit of that happiness. I can see myself doing many different things in music, but singing and songwriting will always be the endgame for me. As I venture across the country this January to Nashville, I hope to get the opportunity to further mature in my art and find my way in this industry.

- CREATIVE DIRECTION AND FASHION DIRECTOR - ANA L. ROMAN