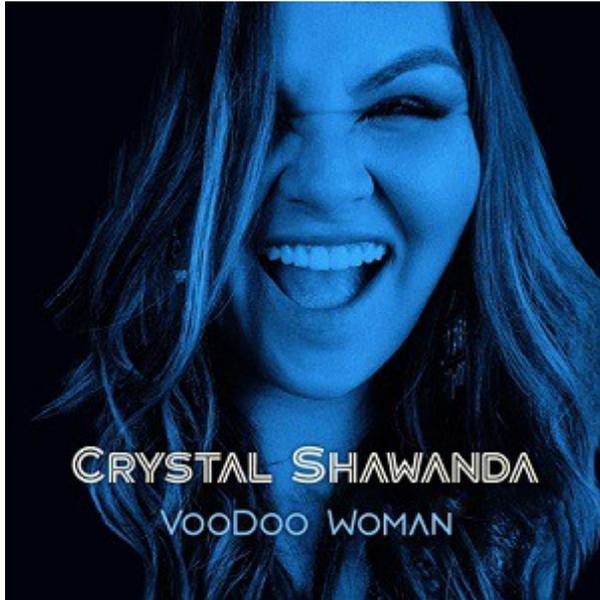


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Singer Crystal Shawanda Chases Dreams and Trades Country for Blues on New *Voodoo Woman* CD, Coming September 21 from True North Records

Her New Gritty, Soul-Drenched Release Available Via Download Now

TORONTO, ON – True North Records announces a September 21 release date for singer Crystal Shawanda’s new CD, *Voodoo Woman*. The new album is already available via download at these platforms:

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Sometimes, even the most instinctive singers need a little time to find their true voice. Just ask Crystal Shawanda. The celebrated Canadian-born, Nashville-based songwriter and musician has built a decade-long career on her hugely emotive performances, scoring a major label deal, chart hits, critical acclaim, marquee tours and a fervent fan following along the way. She was even the subject of a reality show, “Crystal: Living the Dream” on the CMT television network. Yet it has taken Shawanda until studio album number five — the gritty, soul-drenched, and positively electrifying *Voodoo Woman* — to pinpoint her essence as a blues singer, even though her previous albums would mostly be filed under country and she has been performing since her teens.

With her country debut album producing a Top 20 radio hit, Top 20 *Billboard* Country Albums chart status — plus more than 50,000 copies sold in the U.S. — Shawanda couldn’t help but feel out of place within the genre.

“The whole time I was singing Patsy Cline on stage, I was singing Etta James at home,” Shawanda admits.

Voodoo Woman presents a modern take on the blues, capturing the resilience of the human spirit with the intensity and range of a multi-faceted woman whose story is finally being told. “The songs just fell out of me and it was like setting my voice free,” Shawanda confesses. “I can’t help but feel like I’m home, no longer holding back.”

Indeed, that deep veneration of the blues is positively palpable on *Voodoo Woman*. Witness Shawanda’s thrilling interpretations of Big Mama Thornton’s “Hound Dog” and “Ball and Chain,” Koko Taylor’s “Voodoo Woman,” Dorothy Moore’s “Misty Blue” and Etta James’ “I’d Rather Go Blind,” all gold-star gems in the blues canon demanding equal parts knock-kneed reverence and enormous skill. Shawanda and husband, guitarist/collaborator Dewayne Strobel bring both.

And *Voodoo Woman* — cut live-off-the-floor in Nashville alongside a boatload of talented guests— is a dazzling mix of “tributes to my heroes who led me to the blues” and previously released originals recut to meet the ever-evolving standards of co-producers Shawanda and Strobel.

“These are all first-take vocals. We didn’t redo anything,” explains Shawanda, who can frequently be found moonlighting, guitar in hand, at Nashville’s famed Bourbon Street Blues and Boogie Bar. “My fans have often said they wished they could feel the energy of the live show on the records. That was a goal for us. Every time I went into the vocal booth, I treated it like a live performance.”

Not surprisingly, the new album kicks it right out of the gate. Scorching opener “Wang Dang Doodle” is a harp-goosed corker penned by blues legend Willie Dixon. The track provides Shawanda’s soaring, sandpapery delivery with maximum momentum.

Elsewhere, as on the candlelit focus track “I’ll Always Love You” written by Larry Grisham and Tommy Stillwell (aka The Beat Daddys and friends/mentors to Shawanda and Strobel), the singer dials down her power to unearth the song’s richly evocative and wholly universal emotion.

“I fell in love with that song, which first appeared on *The Whole World’s Got the Blues*, but we completely re-recorded it here,” she says. “We didn’t feel we had caught its heart before. After our daughter Zhaawande was born, the song took on a different meaning. I started singing it differently; it was sweeter, more personal. And I recorded that song — and most of this album — with Zhaawande in my arms. So,” she laughs, “that’s probably my favorite song on the album.”

Equally resonant is Shawanda’s reading of the classic “Misty Blue,” elevated to megahit status in

1976 by Dorothy Moore. “You don’t have to add much flash to a song like that,” Shawanda confirms, though she pretty much can’t help *but* adding flash to every song she tackles.

Notable originals on the new album include the saucy and slowly percolating “Cry Out for More,” a Shawanda/Strobel co-write. “It’s a song about the push and pull of relationships... working through those moments of ‘You drive me crazy... but I’m also crazy about you,’” Shawanda howls. “And because we are husband and wife, we can really put that out there.

“Dewayne and I also wrote ‘Bluetrain’ to show the correlation between the missing and murdered Indigenous women in the north and missing and murdered Black women in the south. It’s about finding peace.”

“Trouble,” another blistering original on *Voodoo Woman*, showcases both Shawanda’s peerless belting and her broader influences. “That song has a bit of a throwback, Tina Turner-feel to it. It’s about being in love with bad boys,” she says. “It was done so fast and I just love it.

Having grown up a native North American on the Wikwemikong reserve on an island in Ontario, it was there her parents encouraged Crystal to sing, play guitar, and ultimately find her start in country music. It was her oldest brother, however, who introduced her to the blues. “Singing the blues is like letting a bird out of a cage,” she says. “This feels like what I am supposed to be doing. When I sing the blues, I can let loose and really be who I am as a vocalist and song stylist.

“That’s what *Voodoo Woman* is about,” she adds. “I am so grateful to my country fans for the career they’ve given me. But everybody has new dreams every day and if we don’t chase them, we’ll never figure out who we really are. I hope my country fans find the courage to chase their dreams, too.

“*Voodoo Woman* is a whole new Crystal Shawanda. And when you think about it, blues is the root of everything; country, pop, rock — they all derive from the blues. Even country led me to the blues. Hank Williams sang ‘Lovesick Blues’ and ‘Long Gone Lonesome Blues.’ Maybe this album is like a mini-education in blues! If that’s how people approach it, well, that’s fine with me.”

Hi-res cover: <http://www.markpuccimedia.com/Crystal-Shawanda-CD-Cover.jpg>

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