

Kashena Sampson - Bio

“I had \$3 in my bank account but I thought, ‘I’m working on Tuesday, I’ll be ok. Then the tornado hit and that didn’t happen.’” Last year, Kashena Sampson had plans in place for her new album *Time Machine*, but then — well, life happened.

The Nashville-based singer-songwriter had already finished her forthcoming album — an 11-song journey through her struggles with co-dependency and finding herself, illuminated by a voice that harkens back to a time when Linda Rondstadt and Fleetwood Mac reigned supreme — and then her path shifted, as did that of so many other musicians over the past year. A singular part of her story, though, is that Kashena also funds her music through a bartending job at The Basement East, which was destroyed by the March 2020 tornado that hit Nashville just a few weeks before the pandemic did.

“I had the record ready to go, and then the tornado took away the funding for it,” she says, in a matter-of-fact manner that speaks a lot about who Kashena is: she’s easygoing by nature, but also quietly assured in her ability to consistently figure things out. “Here in times of stillness, I know I’ll be okay / If I listen to it closely, I always find my way,” she sings on the album’s title track.

“It’s about your past, where you came from, what made you who you are today,” she says of the song. “Nobody really knows what they are doing. We are all just trying to figure out this life thing, and the answers can always be found within.”

When having a conversation with Kashena, there’s a sneaking suspicion she’s always been just as introspective as she is now. She offers the kind of comments and observations that make it clear she’s always had a knack for tapping into what’s happening around her and identifying the universal feelings that both trouble and fuel us all.

“*Time Machine* tells the story of my struggles with codependency, personal growth and self worth,” she says. “My internal struggle with relationships, the music business, and trying to find joy in the little things in life. In the past, I’ve always looked for things outside myself to fix me and I’ve always come up short. It’s the journey of me discovering that happiness and contentment is an inside job and nothing outside of myself is going to fix that.”

Time Machine was recorded in February 2019 with producer Jon Estes, who played bass, piano, cello and organ on the album, and with whom she also worked with for

2017's *Wild Heart*. They tracked everything to tape over two days, along with Jeremy Fetzer on guitar, Jon Radford on drums and Elizabeth Estes on strings.

"Hello Darkness" is the lone cover on the album, originally performed by Dutch psych-rock band Shocking Blue. Covers themselves are familiar territory for Kashena, who spent several years performing on a cruise ship that took her around the world — Australia, Italy, Vietnam, Romania, and the Amazon among her many destinations — before she made her way to Nashville, from her home town of Las Vegas. During her three-year stint, she performed a wide array of shows ranging from Opera to Motown to Broadway and '60s and '70s covers. Eventually, mixed in among Joan Baez, Dolly Parton and John Denver, she started adding in her original songs that her patrons loved.

Following her travels, Kashena ventured to Nashville — sight unseen. In the years since her move in 2015, she's become a valuable member of the local music community, as evidenced by some of her co-writers on the album: Erin Rae, Mary Bragg and Kyshona Armstrong. Along with Kashena's sister, Jolana Sampson, all of the originals were written by women.

"Alone and In Love Again," "The Black Sea" and "Work of Art" each discuss various aspects of relationships: dysfunction, nostalgia and eventually moving on. "I Plead Desire" is a classic fairytale of unrequited love, inspired in part by a misheard lyric from Judee Sill's "Jesus Was A Crossmaker."

"From The Outside" takes a closer look at the daily struggles of a musician's life: "It takes a lot of dedication and sacrifice to follow your dreams and not get discouraged. People see the end results but they don't always see the work it takes to get those results. I'm reminded when I'm on stage and performing for people that this is my passion, this brings me joy, and that I was given a gift to share with people, to help them escape from the realities of life momentarily or to relate on an emotional level and not feel so alone."

"Whole Lot Better" is a driving anthem of self-assuredness, celebrating new beginnings. "I had just moved into my very own place for the first time in about eight years," Kashena says. "This song just came to me, I wrote it in an hour."

"Little Spot of Sun" presents an opportunity to appreciate the small joys in life, like a dog laying in the sunshine. "It's about searching for the good in life and finding your happiness. Dogs do a great job of this," Kashena says. "No matter what our past struggles have been, we can choose to live in the moment and find gratitude in each

day. It's a reminder that nothing is permanent. When things are bad, hold on because it will get better again, and when things are good enjoy it because there will be low spots again."

It's been a little more than a year since Kashena Sampson's life shifted, since her plans changed, since she re-grouped and found a way amidst incredibly difficult circumstances. If *Time Machine* is Kashena discovering her own resilience, its release may just be the strongest example of doing just that, on her own terms.

Kashena will release three singles from *Time Machine* in summer 2021, followed by the full album on September 10, 2021.