

• A female musical revolution has begun

Ashanthi launched her debut solo album *Sandawathuren* on November 23. Arthur Wamanan and Warren Balthazar checked out the hip and happening launch!

Ashanthi's SANDAWATHUREN

Ashanthi released her debut solo album *Sandawathuren* under the Universal Music / M Entertainment labels on the November 23, at the official launch party at Tabu Ultra Lounge.

With a tour schedule and workload that allows for very little wriggle-room, the diva's long-awaited album has been a steep learning curve and a labour of love. "The album is a fresh perspective on life and love" says the sultry RnB singer. "I want it to be like someone's favourite t-shirt — an album that you feel at home with, a soundtrack to life of sorts."

Production-wise Ashanthi says the album is a fusion of the newest sounds - a blend of ethnic melodies and radio-friendly hip hop/rnb and pop ballads. With production powerhouses such as Bathiya Jayakody, Mahesh Denipitiyya, the Ranganathan brothers (Sri and Sarangan) behind the mixing desk and Eranga Jayawansa creating beats and SFX for the album.

Other artistes featured on the album are Bertrum Charles (vocals), Randhir Witana (rap / lyrics) Redrum (rap), Nawarathna Gamage (melody composition), Nuwan Balasuriya (flute), Ruwan Weerasekera (violin), Jananath Warakagoda (ethnic drums / percussion), Dave Collins (saxophone) and members of the Sri Lanka Youth Orchestra on additional cello and violin.

The writers were specifically hand picked from the 'cream of the crop,' in order to handle each song with an individually unique approach. Nilar Cassim, Vasantha Dukkannarala and Hemasiri Halpita are the creators of lyrics specially conceptualised by Ashanthi and planned by both Bathiya & Ashanthi, while melodies for the album were created by Ashanthi, Bathiya, Sri, Sarangan, Nawarathna Gamage, Eranga and Rajeev and music tracks by Bathiya, Shyama Sri, Sarangan and Eranga. The album is sponsored by Rexona, Nescafe and KIT.

Ashanthi's intentions for her album are hardly fame-driven. At the moment, she is the first and only Sri Lankan female artist signed to an international record label — 'Sony Music' (2003) and now 'Universal Music' with the *Sandawathuren* album (2006).

She feels this achievement is testament to the potential of female musicians in Sri Lanka. "I want the album to be an inspiration to other artists such as myself. There is so much untapped talent out there."



The challenges of producing her album have been plentiful, claims Ashanthi. She confesses that the creative process behind the album has been one of the biggest journeys she's had to take. "Composing lyrics that are memorable, forming a concept for a song and basically creating the right chemistry has honestly been the biggest but most enjoyable hurdle for me."

Maintaining mass-market appeal has also been a learning experience for the young diva. "My main aim is to cater to fans from all backgrounds," says Ashanthi. A fusion of ethnic

RnB and hip hop with traditional Sri Lankan styles, creating an explosive, energetic and futuristic sound of her own for all segments of the Sri Lankan market, defines Ashanthi's unique genre of 'ethnic music' for the new album.

All music tracks are entirely in Sinhala language (with the exception of two English songs) and consists of 14 tracks. Although the album is targeted to the local market, it is one with global appeal with international musicians being featured.

The six months following

the release of her album are set to be very hectic. "It will be a never-ending series of concerts, tours and promotional activity," she says. However, for an artist with eyes on making it internationally, such a workload is par for the course she confesses.

For fans who have waited in anticipation for the diva's (and

Sri Lanka's) first ever female ethnic RnB album, the stage is set for a renaissance in female Sri Lankan music with the release of Ashanthi's album *Sandawathuren*.

A host of information on the artiste and downloads otherwise inaccessible are available to fans from Ashanthi's official website: www.ashanthi.com.