

'Long Island Country Rock' (continued from page 1)

calls 'Long Island Country Rock.' Helping her craft this new sound are two-time Grammy-nominated executive producer and writer Bobby "Guy" Grazioplene, who has produced for household-name artists like Whitney Houston and Celine Dion; Tony Bruno, musical director for singer Rihanna; and Joey Sykes, who has produced for groups ranging from Hall and Oates to N'Sync.

"We have the most amazing heavy-hitters working with us on this project, and it's just a matter of time before everyone knows how great it's going to be," said Matassa.

If Matassa sounds optimistic about how her album will turn out, she has good reason to be. The lifelong singer started classical voice training at age nine, and studied opera for five years with a singer from the Metropolitan Opera.

In fact, her first musical career came about solely on the strength of her voice; as a teenager, she was performing locally with a band named Recovery when a dance producer for Emergency Records heard her sing. The next thing she surprised 19-year-old knew, she was recording songs professionally.

"It happened so quickly, I couldn't even tell you...literally within one month's time, I recorded the demo and had a record deal within a couple of weeks," remembered Matassa.

Both of Matassa's singles *I've Got the Hots for You* (1987) and *Rock Me Baby* (1988) received national and international airtime, and broke the top 10 on the dance music charts. She toured with other popular dance artists like Taylor Dayne and Brenda K. Starr, and enjoyed rubbing shoulders with celebrities while she performed for the crowds.

Still, the life of a dance-pop star had its downsides; while Matassa loved perform-

ing, she didn't feel that the songs the record company was giving her really suited her voice, and wished for an opportunity to show the audience what she was truly capable of. She wanted to write her own songs, and pursue a style that spoke to people's emotions more than fast-paced club anthems. However, Emergency Records- already past their prime when they signed Matassa- was not ideally positioned to support her.

"I was like their little flicker, trying to keep the record company alive at that point," she said. When her producer at the time decided to opt out of dance music and instead pursue Christian rock, Matassa left the music industry rather than start over from square one. Meanwhile, there were other considerations; she had met her future husband, and it seemed as though it was time for her life to go in a different direction.

Still, Matassa never entirely gave up her singing career while she settled into the life of a suburban mother. In addition to doing voice-overs for commercials, some with the Plainview company Digital Waterworks, she regularly performed at clubs both on Long Island and in Manhattan. Wherever there was an opportunity to sing backed by a live band, she would go; her parents often babysat for the children while Mom went out to go perform.

And yet, despite having plenty of opportunities to sing, Matassa felt that she might be missing out on something big. "I went over to my husband and I said 'you know, I don't want to live my life saying what if one day I would have taken this road...I don't think I'm ready to put away the microphone,'" she said. However, breaking into the music industry- at any age- is hardly easy.

Fortunately, not long after deciding she wanted to record again, she received a call from producer (and old friend) Joey Sykes, who had some songs he wanted her to listen to. Sykes needed a certain kind of voice, and thought that Matassa's might fit the bill.

Not only did she love the songs, but she thought they were a perfect match for an idea she'd been developing for a long time: a blend of her favorite elements from country and rock, or Long Island Country Rock. "It's that edginess and that soul of rock music, but it's the storytelling and that easy listening of country," she explained. Sykes and Matassa recorded a demo, and soon enough, the album was in the works.

While the two dominant genres are obviously country and rock, Matassa noted that her musical tastes range far and wide, thus Long Island Country Rock includes many elements. Influences range from the melodic styles of Barbara Streisand and Celine Dion, to rock acts like Lynyrd Skynyrd. Having spent part of her childhood in south Florida, Matassa is also quite a fan of southern country.

In addition to recording the songs provided by Sykes, Matassa has also co-written many of the songs that will appear on *Me Time*, giving her music a far more personal feel than her earlier material. The difference between the two approaches is obvious when listening to the music; while *I've Got the Hots for You* is catchy, danceable and fun, Matassa's voice is buried under many layers of production, and the lyrics are unremarkable. However in *Me Time*, the upcoming album's title track, her expressive voice is supported by the music, not overwhelmed by it, while she sings about something every mom can relate to; needing a little

bit of time all to herself.

Currently, Matassa is wrapping up the recording of *Me Time* at Cove City Sound Studios in Glen Cove, where other Long Island-based artists, like Billy Joel and Mariah Carey, have recorded. In addition to her all-star producing team, she also has many professional musicians, like those from the Broadway musical *Rock of Ages*, helping her make a mark on the music industry.

Later this month, she'll travel to Nashville, Tennessee, where she plans to write and record songs with songwriter Don Rollins, possibly for *Me Time* or perhaps for her next album. She plans to do some touring, and hopes that Long Islanders might embrace her as they have so many other hometown favorites.

In addition to pursuing her love of singing, Matassa has another goal: to show that a 40-year-old mother of two can follow her dreams. More generally, she wants to demonstrate that age should not be an impediment to doing something you love, pointing to the recent success of British singer Susan Boyle as an example of how the music industry is changing to accommodate people who differ from the traditional idea of a music star.

"Singing is my life; it's a gift that I believe that I have, and I just love what I do. I love what I do, and I think this is the time- this is my time," Matassa said.

Me Time is slated for release on Feb. 14; the first single, *I Don't Feel Anything*, will also be available for purchase from iTunes and other vendors. Those who want a sneak peak at the album can hear a clip of the first single now at www.ReverbNation.com. For more information, visit www.lisamatassa.com, which will be updated as the album release date draws closer.