

FEATURES

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Terius Nash's

high art is ghetto-friendly

The artist, whose second album as The-Dream comes out tomorrow, wants to become as successful a performer as he is a producer

BY MELISSA MAERZ
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The songwriter and R 'n' B singer Terius Nash has worn US\$2,000 worth of rolled-up bills on a chain around his neck, but he would like to cultivate a much more expensive habit.

"Mariah Carey took me up in her private jet last week," said Nash, who records under the name The-Dream. "It was like: Ooooooh! I've got to get me one of these. Because now that I've got a taste, I'm never going back. I'm going to fly this thing everywhere — to LA, to Atlanta, to New York. I'm going to fly this thing down the street and park it outside your apartment."

Nash, 30, was sprawled on a couch at Power 105.1, a radio station in New York, dressed in limited-edition neon sneakers and a new black Armani jacket

so crisp that it would probably crunch if you touched it. But *Love vs Money*, his second album as The-Dream, which is out tomorrow on Island Def Jam, explores the ways luxury living can destroy a man's relationships, like his marriage to the R 'n' B singer Nivea.

"Money affects everything, from who I'm with to what label I'm on, so everything I do now is about protecting it," he said. "But I didn't understand how powerfully that would affect my home life."

HIT-MAKING MACHINE

He and his songwriting partner, Christopher Stewart, known as Tricky, are one of pop's most inventive and in-demand hit-making teams. (Stewart writes the music, Nash the lyrics.) After scoring their first major break in 2003 with Britney Spears' *Me Against the Music*, Billboard's best-selling dance single that year, the duo churned out a string of number one smashes, including Beyoncé's *Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)*, Carey's *Touch My Body*, J Holiday's *Bed* and, most famously, Rihanna's *Umbrella*, which earned a Grammy nomination for record of the year in 2008. Nash has often said they wrote the song in 15 minutes.

Over the past year they have composed more than 200 songs, working with artists as diverse as Usher, Jesse McCartney, Sting and Celine Dion, at a rate of US\$110,000 to US\$165,000 per track, Stewart said.

But while Nash is one of pop's most reliable hit

makers, he's not yet a pop star. As The-Dream he had hit singles with *Falsetto* and *Shawty Is a Ten*, and his acclaimed, Prince-inspired 2007 debut album, *Love/Hate*, sold 537,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan. He has been criticized for an uncharismatic stage presence, however, and when he opened for Mary J Blige and Jay-Z on their blockbuster *Heart of the City* tour, his set was largely ignored by critics. When the Grammy nominations for this year were announced, he was upset that his solo work was overlooked.

"Even though in my mind I know I should have beat everyone, I also know that some people missed the first album," he said. "So now it's about marketing. Now I've got the Mariah's and the Kanyes and the Jamie Foxxes of the world saying, 'I've seen The-Dream write four hit songs in 40 minutes.' Soon the pop world will be like, 'OK, we see you now.'"

'LOVE VS MONEY'

With *Love vs Money* he's ready to do whatever it takes to make himself a boldface name. He has been showing up at parties with the R 'n' B singer Christina Milian, sparking rumors that they are dating — gossip conveniently timed to mesh with the release of *Us Against the World*, the new single he wrote for her. He also upped the star power on the new album with cameos by Kanye West, Lil Jon and Carey, who also appears in the video for *My Love*.

Antonio Reid, known as LA, chairman of Island Def Jam Music Group, said he believed that *Love vs Money* would be a bigger hit than its predecessor because it showcased Nash's crossover appeal. "He's that rare combination of high art like Kanye West, but also ghetto-friendly like R Kelly," he said. "That's part of what makes him one of the great undiscovered talents of our time." Written during Nash's divorce from Nivea in 2008, *Love vs Money* offers an emotional, confessional take on the ways wealth can make personal relationships feel empty. The interlocked, three-song mini-epic that anchors the album — *Love vs. Money*, *Love vs Money Part 2* and *Fancy* — finds Nash admitting

that all the Bentleys and trips to Paris he bought to show his affection ended up just making him feel used.

He sings sadly on *Fancy*:
*They say you can't buy love
Man, they lyin'
If Christian LaCroix brings a smile
I'll buy it*

It's as if he's having trouble convincing himself it's all true. With music written by Stewart, Nash has made a lush headphones album, pulsing with new wave and funk melodies, synth-fueled ballads, thundering 808 drum machine beats and little electronic details that occasionally sound like R 'n' B's answer to Radiohead.

DOING ALRIGHT

"*Love vs Money* is music as theater, and no one does that better than The-Dream," said Stephen Hill, president for music programming and specials for BET. "But he also knows how to give a young, black audience what they want." Hill pointed to *Sweat It Out*, a song about a woman who has just perfected a slick hairstyle, only to see it frizz up when things get steamy.

If for some reason the new album isn't a hit, Nash's day job isn't too shabby. He's currently working with Carey on her next album, and he has just finished an album for the new R 'n' B girl group Elektrik Red, which will be released on his Radio Killa imprint this month. And Nash said he and West had talked about doing a collaborative album in the spirit of R Kelly and Jay-Z's *Best of Both Worlds*.

Essentially Nash is always working. "I call my attorney three times a day," he said. "The other day I came up with this phrase, 'That's Jesus!' That's a combination of saying something's hot and it's also a blessing. So I called my attorney and asked him, 'Can we get 'That's Jesus!' copyrighted just in case it shows up on a T-shirt?'"

He credits his grandfather, who was a concrete mason, with his work ethic. "He basically built the city I grew up in," he said. "He came out of a bad time for blacks in the South, but even though we lived in the hood, we had a boat, some cars and a house that was paid for. So I've always had a different outlook on life. There's nothing I can't do. My uncle used to say, 'You'll go on and become the dream of the family.' That's how I got my name."

Nash shook his head, smiling. "He was probably thinking that I'd become a doctor or something. But if he was here right now, I think he'd say I've done all right."

PHOTO: NYTIMES NEWS SERVICE

PLANET POP

Rihanna's attorney says the singer would testify against **Chris Brown** if called as a witness in her boyfriend's assault case.

Donald Etra, who is representing the 21-year-old Barbados native, said Friday that Rihanna would be required by law to testify if prosecutors subpoena her.

Etra appeared in court on Thursday when Brown made his first appearance on charges of assaulting and making criminal threats to his superstar girlfriend. Brown's arraignment was postponed until April 6.

Etra said Rihanna did not want a "no contact" order issued against Brown, but that she will report any violations of an order prohibiting the 19-year-old singer from threatening, harassing or harming his girlfriend. A court order grants her the authority to record any violations of the order.

The order is not uncommon in cases where a victim says he or she doesn't want to completely cut off communication with a person, said Steve Cron, a Santa Monica criminal defense attorney

who has represented celebrities such as **Paula Poundstone** and **Scott Weiland**.

"There are limits to when you can record phone calls and conversations," Cron said. "She can record those conversations if it's for the purpose of showing there's a violation of the restraining order." Etra said Rihanna, whose real name is Robyn Rihanna Fenty, wants the case over with quickly. "She wants to get along with her life and career," he said.

Brown was arrested Feb. 8 stemming from an altercation that police say he had with Rihanna in a car in an upscale Los Angeles neighborhood.

A search warrant affidavit filed by a Los Angeles police detective described a brutal fight in which Brown allegedly punched, bit and choked Rihanna until she nearly lost consciousness.

He issued a statement a week after the incident, saying he was "sorry and saddened" by what happened. He politely answered a court commissioner's questions during his brief appearance

Thursday, but did not speak to reporters afterward.

US rapper **Coolio** was arrested at Los Angeles International Airport on Friday for drug possession, officials said.

The 45-year-old Grammy-Award winner, best known for his 1995 hit *Gangsta's Paradise*, was taken into custody at around 10:30am and later transferred to a Los Angeles Police Department station for booking.

Police would not comment on what drug the rapper, whose real name is Artis Leon Ivey Jr, was allegedly found with, stating only it was an "illegal substance."

The TMZ.com Web site reported that the drug was crack cocaine.

Fresh from a two-month Caribbean vacation, singer **Amy Winehouse** is due in court for an alleged attack on a fellow guest at a party last year.

The retro-soul singer was charged with assault Thursday for allegedly attacking a fan at an end-of-summer ball in London on Sept. 26, police and the singer's

representative said.

Dancer **Sherene Flash** had been quoted by tabloid newspapers as saying she was hit in the eye by the 25-year-old *Back to Black* singer after asking to take her picture at the Berkeley Ball, a charity function held in central London's Berkeley Square.

Spokesman Chris Goodman said Friday that Winehouse went voluntarily to the police station, where she was arrested and charged. She was released and is due to appear in court on March 17, police said.

Winehouse's battles with addiction and frequent run-ins with the law have been highly publicized. She was fined for illegally possessing marijuana in Norway in 2007, and her drug problems have been front page news in Britain, where she was pictured puffing on what appeared to be a crack pipe last year.

She also got a police warning in April of last year after scuffling with two men during a night

out on the town in Camden, a young and raucous north London neighborhood known for its music scene — and drug culture.

Winehouse, who has been in and out of rehab, has recently returned from an extended break in the Caribbean island of St Lucia.

Jade Goody, the cancer-stricken British reality television star, was christened along with her two children on Saturday in what her publicist called a "final good-bye."

The 27-year-old, who found fame on *Big Brother* in 2002, was "very pale and fragile" during the ceremony at the Royal Marsden Hospital in west London, publicist **Max Clifford** said.

Sitting in a chair, Goody wore her hospital gown and had her drip still attached during the christenings.

Clifford said it was the last thing that Goody would do in the public eye.

Rihanna says she will do her duty.

PHOTO: AP

The star, whose cervical cancer has spread to other parts of her body, has likely only weeks to live.

—AGENCIES

