

WHO'S NEXT



Russell James

SUSAN JUSTICE

HOMETOWN: New York City
INFLUENCES: Tracy Chapman, Death Cab for Cutie, Alanis Morissette
ALBUM: *Eat Dirt*, due out in 2012
WEBSITE: susanjusticemusic.com

ARUBA-BORN SUSAN JUSTICE GREW UP TRAVELING THE world with her itinerant parents and nine siblings as part of a controversial religious sect called the Family, spreading the group's message through music. "Sometimes we would stay for a few months, but most of the time it was a new town every few days," she says. Eventually they settled in New York, living in a city bus renovated by her father. Forbidden from consuming culture not approved by her parents' religion, Justice developed her love of secular music in private.

Chafing under such restrictions, Justice ran away from home—such as it was—and began to make a living busking in the New York subway, earning as much as \$500 a day. "I felt really connected to people singing in the subway," she says. "It was amazing to play by myself for a change. That's when I really began to blossom as

a songwriter." Justice was discovered performing in a club by Spin Doctors drummer Aaron Comess, who helped her find a manager.

Her next important connection came with songwriter and producer Toby Gad (Beyoncé, Fergie, Alicia Keys), who helped Justice craft her upcoming major-label debut, *Eat Dirt*. "Toby was like my psychiatrist," she says. "Because at that time, I was kind of homeless. I didn't know what I was doing with my life. Toby made me dig deep to write about what I was feeling. Getting in touch with those feelings was the real breakthrough. Toby set me on the path to writing songs that gave people a window into my personal story." Part of that process was learning to open up about her unusual upbringing. "My past has made me who I am today," she declares. "And for that I'm grateful. I've survived and I'm feeling positive and creative. I'm looking ahead, not backward."