

## Duffy Throwback

**G**rowing up in the early '90s, Aimee Ann Duffy was as far from a soul child as you could get. Her tiny hometown of Nefyn, Wales? Literally a world away from Muscle Shoals or Detroit. There were no record shops in Nefyn, no MTV, and radio was limited to Top 40. But when a 6-year-old Duffy found her father's videotape of the Rolling Stones in 1964 on ITV's *Ready, Steady, Go!*, little Aimee knew exactly where she belonged.

"I wanted to be Mick Jagger," she says now. "He had all those great songs, and he's sustained an amazing career." Some 17 years later, she's well on her way toward Jagger-hood. The petite songstress' debut, *Rockferry* (Mercury), is a Memphis- and Motown-inspired mélange of platinum hooks that have already propelled her to the top of the UK charts. She's hoping to repeat the feat in America this month, and put to rest the sniping that she's an Amy Winehouse-come-lately to the transatlantic soul revival.

Duffy, 23, who uses her surname professionally, hustled for her chance to shine. As a teenager, she traded her schoolbooks for Aretha, Candi Staton, and Stax. An early demo made its way to producer Bernard Butler, whose work with Black Kids and Neneh Cherry, among others, earned him the sobriquet "the thinking man's Mark Ronson." She took two buses and two trains each way between Nefyn and London to work with her new mentor, who turned her onto Sam Cooke while helping her cultivate a Ronnie Spector-esque vibrato.

"There's just a really sincere approach to all these amazing records," she says unabashedly of her muses. "They were never overproduced. It's all about the songs." And so it is for Duffy. Even the video for her single "Mercy" forgoes the usual storyboard to focus on performance. It's an old-school formula that may just grant this Welsh siren her childhood wish. "It would have been easy for me [in the video] to pretend to be in jail, begging someone for mercy," she says, "but I don't like role-play in music. I try to be authentic." *Kevin S. Ford*

life big sis of J2K—one half of local DJ duo Flosstradamus—had the "ghetto house" hipster set at her fingertips last summer with "Pro Nails" (its remix featured fellow Southsider Kanye West). Now the buzz is drumming up anticipation for her forthcoming debut, *Koko B. Ware* (Downtown), out next month. The girls of **GET 'EM MAMIS**, Roxzi and Symphony, are grimmer than Kid Sis. Representing B-More, their snappy single "At the Club" is fierce street music. A lyrical sample: "It's Baltimore, where the crime rate raise every year / And every nigga wit' a body got a tat of a tear." The duo is featured on *The Wire*'s 2008 *Beyond Amsterdam* ▶▶▶