

▶ CUED UP: Deepa Soul

As Is!

BY GREGORY T. ANGELO

You've heard it before; the tough-luck tale of many a freshman dance act: Girl has talent, girl links with upstart producer, girl records hot track, girl gets hot track co-opted by established vocalist and is back to square one. It happened to Deepa Soul. But unlike most would-bees and also-rans, the New Orleans-born Brooklyn resident didn't go running home to momma—she came back hard.

"It was a rude awakening," Deepa says. "I'm not into being cut-throat, but I had to back up afterward and say, 'You know what Deepa? You're going to be prepared next time.'"

She was. In 2000, Deepa shot back with the single "Nowhere Love," and this time, she wasn't playin' around. Produced by Junior Vasquez, the track quickly became a hit at his Twilo bashes, eventually finding its way onto his *Nervous Breakdown* compilation of 2001.

Now—older, wiser to the dirty dealings of the music biz and with

more understanding of her identity as an artist than ever—the sassy sanger is ready to unleash her latest Vasquez collaboration: a cover of Gladezz's 1993 stormer "As I Am."

"We went through several different ways to do it," Deepa says of the recording process. "We would do it the classic way, and then Junior was like, 'No, let's go back to the drawing board.' Then I started coming up with different vamps and before you knew it, we took parts of different takes and created the final mix."

"I identified with [the song]," Deepa says. "For me, it's my mantra. We should all be ourselves. These days, it's all about reality television this and reality television that—let's have some reality *outside* of the television, *okay?*" And Deepa Soul's life isn't just real—it's really up in your face. "I was being told, 'You can't be openly gay! It's never going to work!'" she spouts. "I am so tired of people saying that you can't be who you are! Gay people inspire others through fashion, art and music, so why not?"

'MO HAWK
Deepa Soul's name isn't just a moniker; it's a mantra.



It took Deepa a long time to come to that conclusion. "Growing up in the deep south with a Baptist upbringing and going to an all-girls' academy run by a bunch of nuns, I knew that I was different from everyone else, so I had to tap into another energy to survive," Deepa says. "That energy was my inner self."

That's Deepa Soul: no apologies, no excuses and—and no regrets. "It was all part of the learning curve for me," she says of the past hardships that made her the person she is today. "It surprised me to learn how people can do you like that. But I took my time, and now here I am." We'll take it. **N**



▶ TEK: Bose QuietComfort 2 Headphones

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