

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TAMI NEILSON BLENDS HER POWERHOUSE VOCALS AND SLYLY SUBVERSIVE LYRICS WITH A GORGEOUS VINTAGE SOUND ON THE STYLISH SASSAFRASS!

The award-winning New Zealand singer delivers a dynamic set of twangy rock 'n' soul music on June 1

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — **Tami Neilson** won't be staying New Zealand's secret for much longer. For the past decade, the Canadian-born, New Zealand-based singer/songwriter has been the queen of her adopted homeland's country and roots music scenes. She picked up handful of Best Country Album awards at the New Zealand Music Awards and won the prestigious APRA Silver Scroll for excellence in songwriting.

With her new album, **SASSAFRASS!** (due June 1 on Outside Music), Neilson takes a giant step that should only bring her more widespread acclaim. On this 11-track effort, she places a heavier emphasis on soul music while not abandoning her country and rockabilly roots. Neilson conjures up a wonderfully retro style that sounds like it could be a lost gem from the late '50s or early '60s; however, beneath the classic veneer are frank, highly relevant lyrics.

Sassafrass, a slang word for a sassy person who isn't afraid to speak her mind, serves as a perfect title for this album. The songs, Neilson admits, reflect her developing a "low tolerance for bullsh*t" after years of encountering sexism in her life. They were also influenced by her being a mother of two young boys as well as by the death of her father, who led the family's band, the Neilsons, which was popular in Canada during the '90s.

Neilson characterizes her new album as a "mouthy lovechild of the current social climate and my own experiences as a woman, mother and daughter." The songs address the obstacles she has faced simply because she is a female. "It's also my attempt," she shares, "at challenging a society that doesn't yet treat women equally in order to shape a better future for my children."

On **SASSAFRASS!** Neilson infuses just enough honey into her tunes to make her messages sound sweet in the listeners' ears. She certainly comes out smoking — in several senses of the word — on the disc's lead-off track, "Stay Outta My Business." The sassy, brassy soul number finds her fighting back at trash-talkers in splendidly defiant, hip-shaking fashion. The tune "Bananas" might initially sound like an amusing slice of tropical exotica, but its message pokes fun at gender inequality. Similarly, "Kitty Cat" comes off as a rollicking rockabilly rave-up on first listen, but its moral is a reminder that men can't own a woman's "kitty cat." Neilson also tackles bad girl/good girl stereotypes and Hollywood sexual harassment, respectively, on the slinky, smoky tracks "Devil in a Dress" and "Smoking Gun."

Neilson offers several poignant tributes as well on **SASSAFRASS!** The Rosanne Cash-esque country ballad "Manitoba Sunrise at Motel 6" was written in homage to Glen Campbell on the day he died. She salutes the late, great Sharon Jones on the high-spirited soul number "Miss Jones." "A Woman's Pain," a twangy tale told in a style that recalls Bobbie Gentry, tells the story of Neilson's first-nation grandmother. She delivers a lovely reading of the '50s-style romantic ballad "One Thought of You," which was written by her father.

Tying all these songs together is Neilson's sensational singing. New Zealand critics have it right when they have declared that her voice "is magic," "explodes from the speakers," and "will stop you in your tracks, so powerful and full of color is it." Even rock great Randy Bachman (Guess Who, Bachman-Turner Overdrive) declared she has "the voice to get any song across to any audience."

Neilson's confident vocals are undoubtedly abetted by her being surrounded by familiar collaborators. She co-produced *SASSAFRASS!* with Ben Edwards, the co-producer of her last two critically acclaimed albums, *Dynamite!* and *Don't Be Afraid*. Backing her up in the studio was her talented band, the Hot Rockin' Band of Rhythm: Joe McCallum (drums), Mike Hall (bass), Brett Adams (guitar) and Neil Watson (guitar and pedal steel), who have toured with her around the globe over the past three years. A brass section and strings enhance the album's classic qualities.

With its timeless sound and timely lyrics, *SASSAFRASS!* provides a fantastic introduction to Tami Neilson, whose vibrant musical style blurs the lines of genre and eras, like a soundtrack curated for a Quentin Tarantino film. Discover this for yourself when the album arrives June 1, and make it your musical tonic this summer.

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