

FROM LEFT:
ON TINA: DKNY
LEATHER JACKET;
CALVIN KLEIN TOP;
MICHAEL MICHAEL
KORS JEANS;
GUESS SHOES;
ROBERT LEE
MORRIS EARRINGS;
KENNETH JAY
LANE RING
ON ERICA: ZARA
VEST; FUZZI
JUMPSUIT;
L.A.M.B. SHOES;
MELODY RODGERS
EARRINGS; EFVA
ATTLING CUFF

FOR ALL FASHION
INFORMATION, SEE
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PAGE 132.



GRACE

UNDER

PRESSURE

GOSPEL'S SUPERDUO, **MARY MARY**,
IS DECIDEDLY HUMAN. EACH SISTER IS DEALING
WITH MARRIAGE AND FAMILY ISSUES, A DEMAND-
ING CAREER AND GOD'S PLAN FOR HER LIFE.

BY ADRIENNE
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STYLING BY
FREDDIE LEIBA



FROM LEFT:
ON TINA: ABS
BY ALLEN
SCHWARTZ
DRESS; MELODY
RODGERS
EARRINGS AND
BRACELET;
KENNETH JAY
LANE BRACELET
ON ERICA: LAUREN
RALPH LAUREN
DRESS; SIMAN
TU EARRINGS;
KENNETH
JAY LANE
BRACELETS;
BADGLEY
MISCHKA SHOES

MAKEUP BY AJ ORIMSON; HAIRSTYLING BY KIM KIMBLE; PROP STYLING BY CHARLOTTE MALMLOF

IT'S DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE the women behind the Grammy-winning sound of Mary Mary opening up about their own need for prayer. Then again, maybe it's not so difficult. After all, they are gospel stars. And who stands more in need of prayer than those commissioned to spread the word of God?

It's a tough calling for the believer. Mess up and go to hell. Get too prideful and get your feelings hurt. Live your life as a public Christian celebrity and be susceptible to all kinds of attacks.

Erica and Tina Campbell shouldered many burdens—and to be clear, many, many Grammy-anointed blessings—for more than a decade without taking time out to recharge. But finally, after 12 years of singing and giving, it seems that a higher power might be forcing them to slow down. The signs were overwhelmingly obvious. They got tired. They quarreled. Their bodies, already taxed by grueling tour dates and pregnancies, were exhausted. Their marriages were unraveling—and so were they.

One day, they're singing their award-winning "Go Get It," about grabbing your God-given blessings. The next? They're pissed at each other and giving the side eye to their husbands because something about both marriages just ain't ... right.

Yep. Time for a break from the group, if only to fix the sisterhood and the sacred marriage bed. "My theory is, when your spiritual tank is low, when you're running on empty, you're more susceptible to just doing what your flesh wants to do," says Erica. "It's easier to cuss. It's easier to get mad. It's easier to give up. It's a little harder to forgive. It's a little harder to sacrifice."

She goes on, haltingly, fleshing out the details that led to Mary Mary's current hiatus, which includes no studio work for at least a year, limited touring, more time at home for Tina and a solo project for Erica. "Honestly, this break has a lot to do with me and Tina just kind of being empty," says Erica, smoothing out the fabric of her body-conscious black-and-white striped maxidress. As she talks, her wedding ring glints under the lobby lights inside the swanky Andaz West Hollywood hotel on Sunset Boulevard. "We just give and give and give: an album and a baby and an album and another baby ... It's easy for things to fall apart. How did we get here, where we're mad at each other, and we don't like singing the music and we hate everybody around us?"

Great questions. Do tell.

TINA AND ERICA WERE BORN two years apart and, out of the nine children in the Church of God in Christ-raised Atkins family, they are the ones who became a gospel group. Best friends then. Best friends now. They even married men

who, though unrelated, carry the same surname.

The sisters have made a lucrative living offering spiritual hits that routinely infiltrate the mainstream; "Shackles (Praise You)," from their first album, actually became a club hit. Their acceptance in the secular world is why Mary Mary became a viable business opportunity for WE tv, which has renewed their popular reality show for a third season and recently reported a record high 5.2 million viewers for the network.

But despite more than a decade of steady success, Tina yearned for a break. Settling into her seat at Toast, West Hollywood's scrumptious breakfast eatery, she adjusts her floor-length skirt with a ringless left hand and explains why she must take time off. The past year was hectic. She endured abdominal pains while performing pregnant and often had an attitude. Now she needs time with new baby Santana, born last August, and she has to work on her relationship with hubby Teddy Campbell, the drummer for Jay Leno's band on *The Tonight Show*.

"I spent my whole pregnancy (last year) being miserable, being angry, being irritated with everybody, literally hating the person I was because I was a very unpleasant person to be around," says Tina, a mother of five who got her tubes tied after Santana. "I was uncompromising. I was unmanageable. I was unrealistic. I was lacking compassion. And my hormones were so jacked up. I knew it, and it seemed like I couldn't even fix [the situation]. I don't want to be that [person], pregnant or not pregnant."

It didn't help that the sisters bickered over tour dates and career direction, not to mention the stresses of producing a show and traveling for performances. They both

needed to sleep and let their gestating bodies relax. Tina wanted date nights with Teddy. And Erica wanted to go, go and go some more. Their compromise? Take a break from Mary Mary for an undetermined amount of time. Erica can do her thing, which includes time with 17-month-old Zaya Monique, releasing the single "A Little More Jesus," starting a monthly Bible study with husband, Warrryn Campbell, and perhaps publishing a children's book. And Tina can do her thing, too, limiting the amount of time she travels away from home, producing an album of children's music and perhaps fulfilling the call of a marriage ministry. To be clear, they will still perform concerts here and there, but a new Mary Mary album won't be in the cards until 2015.

And then, the bombshell. It wasn't until after they decided to break—around February—that Tina learned her husband had stepped out on her with a longtime family friend. Whom did she call first with the devastating news? Erica, of course. It was an indescribable setback, especially given that friends came to Tina for relationship advice, and the sisters' marriages became storylines on their reality show.

Tina, as God-fearing as one can get, very nearly lost her mind. And Teddy nearly lost it all. "Once I became aware [of the affair], I initially wanted to kill my husband," says Tina, taking a deep breath and shifting a fork. "I was considering adjusting the will, the living trust and all that kind of stuff. I did physically try to stab him. Several times. Over three days. I [thought I'd have] Erica attend to my children. And when I got them back after so many years—because I could find a way to [kill him] and [claim it was] a crime of passion—I'd spend a little bit of time away and come back."

And you *know* she exchanged texts with the chick, who was promptly exccommunicated from the family and then changed all her numbers. Still, the anger festered. "I was working to become an evil, angry, unforgiving, hateful person. I was literally strategizing ... It never got to the point of physical harm, not really, but my words ... My words hurt."

Teddy doesn't blame her. "I felt like she was justified. I was scared for both of us because she was so angry," he says.

After a week of transitioning through fear, hurt, grief and embarrassment, Tina—quite biblically—saw the light. "Within seven days, I made a decision to forgive my husband."

The reasons behind her decision are



MAX MARA STUDIO JACKET; ZARA TOP; EILEEN FISHER PANTS; EFVA ATTLING EARRINGS AND BRACELET

complicated but essentially boil down to love. “I am deeply in love with this man. I can look in [his] eyes and see the pain [he] was feeling because of the pain he caused me. I decided to forgive him because what I represent is a God who is forgiving and a God who is loving. This is what we represent in our music, right?”

Tina and Teddy talked. Really talked, like they hadn’t talked in such a long time—especially without the cameras. They went to counseling. They’re still in counseling. And Teddy was relieved. The indiscretion occurred two and a half years ago, he says, and he felt he couldn’t keep the secret forever. He had a portent just before saying yes to WE tv, after a family prayer. “[Back then,] I heard God’s voice

“MY HUSBAND AND I MADE A DECISION THAT I WOULD FORGIVE HIM . . . I WOULD REQUIRE MORE OF HIM THAN HE EVER BARGAINED FOR.”
TINA

just as clear as day, like I’m talking to you. [The Lord said,] ‘You know, if [the show] is what she wants, then your sins are going to be exposed.’”

Bravely talking about their situation now, minutes before going to work, Teddy attributes his indiscretion to “empty space” in his schedule and in his marriage. To fix things, the two must tighten up.

“The empty space in your mind is the place the devil occupies,” he says.

Now the couple has filled the space with each another. And while Tina acknowledges that other women might talk smack about her decision to work through this issue, she—quite characteristically—narrows her eyes and speaks forcefully about not giving a hoot about what other people think. Her marriage may be a work in progress, but she feels hopeful, as if they’ve just started dating again. She’s also working hard to love him, mostly because he’s working furiously to keep her.

“His intense fight for me helps me fight for him. My husband and I made a decision that I would forgive him and that I would not remind him of his sins, but I would require more of him than he ever bargained for,” says Tina, married for 13 years now. “With constant prayer and constant confessions, both together and separately, I have been able to overcome those [negative] feelings. We are fighting for us.”

ERICA, LIKE HER SISTER, is a “brickhouse” in the most traditional sense of the word. She’s a married *sista*, but make no mistake: The men in Hollywood have been trying to get at her, and she’s resisted for years. And that’s why she stays prayed up. “When I go out, it’s for work,” she says. “I’m not going out to have drinks and stand around and laugh. I’m going to work the room and shake hands and meet who I’m supposed to meet, trying to let my light shine as much as I can everywhere I go. Then when I’m done, I’m going home to cook dinner for my kids.”

Like Tina, she values being a mom and a wife above all else. But things happen. She and Warrryn were also having troubles. She even had to cancel a major December concert so she could take care of her then-pregnant self. Recently, she retired to her closet to pray and a song poured out.

“We were going through some stuff and dealing with making sure the marriage is tight,” she says. “Each person has to look at his or her part and reassess what he or she has been doing or not been doing, so I was in my closet and I was singing, ‘I need just a little more Jesus. Oh, oh, I need a little more Jesus,’ because I feel like if I just had a little more God, I would do things a little bit better.”

Warrryn, who is also Mary Mary’s producer, overheard the song and started singing with her. Later, they decided to record the piece, essentially about

thanking God for blessings while also asking Him to grant just a smidge more favor and a tad more help. Erica then asked Tina to write the second verse. It’s truly a song born of pain, prayer and healing. It challenges fans who are used to the sisters singing together. Though no strangers to criticism—especially from those who imply that Mary Mary’s brand of modern music is not consistent with strict religious teachings—this new song takes a very different direction.

“Some have said some really nasty things, implied some really ugly things [about my solo project], but I really want to reach the people,” says Erica. “There are so many people who are hurting. I’m doing this because God wants me to do this. I feel like I’m supposed to keep ministering to people. I’m supposed to keep encouraging them, keep singing. And if He keeps giving me songs to write, what is He giving me the songs for?”

With that said, Erica’s ministering goes beyond the new album. Is the world ready for First Lady Campbell?

“I feel like my husband has been called to minister,” she explains. “Now I said, ‘Lord, when I first started dating this guy he worked for Death Row Records, but he was from the church. That was a perfect combination for me: a little street, a little church. I thought I was cool, because I did not want to marry a preacher at all. And somewhere things have changed and turned, but if it is God’s will, then that means He has a plan, so I can’t be selfish and get in the way of His plan just because I don’t understand.’”

Erica hopes they can spread the word of God without instilling fear. And depending on how you were raised, that’s a rather controversial manner of worship.

“Growing up Pentecostal, a lot of people are taught about God through fear, so, they’re afraid. They don’t want to go to hell. People are taught to fear God, and they’re not really taught about the love of God. I think when you teach people that God is love, you don’t want to let them down because you love them so much.”

It sounds like Erica, with her new ministry, and Tina, with her renewed callings, are still giving themselves yet more to do. So much for a break.

“Your faith is not just for your personal relationship with God,” says Erica. “It spills over into your work relationships and your families. We just want people to understand what it means to love and be selfless and sacrifice and to try to be your best. And the rewards are endless. The blessings of God are endless.” ■



CALVIN KLEIN JACKET, TOP AND PANTS; DSQUARED2 SHOES; SIMAN TU EARRINGS; KENNETH JAY LANE NECKLACE