

THE TAMMI SHOW

Vintage Rock talks to vocalist Tammi Savoy, whose debut album with the Chris Casello Combo sees her shining a spotlight on oft-forgotten female R&B greats

WORDS BY JACK WATKINS



When Tammi Savoy took the 2019 Ameripolitan Music Award for Rockabilly Female of the Year, no one was more surprised than the singer herself. “I didn’t even know that I was nominated until I went to do the Nashville Boogie, which was the first major show I did with the Chris Casello Combo,” she says. “I didn’t understand. I was thinking, ‘I’m too new!’ Who was it who knew about me?”

Evaluating the award more deeply, Savoy explains: “I think what helped was that we’d put out a video in 2018 to promote the single I’d just released with Chris, *Big Baby/Ain’t Givin’ Up Nothin’*, which was shot in my living room. We’d posted it on YouTube and Facebook and word spread like crazy. We got a lot of bookings from that, and that was

how we ended up doing the Nashville Boogie.”

The curious thing is that, with her elegant outfits, coiffure and big, bluesy voice – which sounds like a throwback to the era of sassy R&B artists such as LaVern Baker and Ruth Brown – Savoy is not even a rockabilly. “No, I don’t consider myself a rockabilly,” she laughs. “But in America, there really isn’t a category you can put me into, so that’s kind of where they’ve had to place me. And, of course, Chris plays a lot of rockabilly on his guitar.”

Savoy has covered plenty of ground since she started performing in 2014, though the current pandemic has frustrated efforts to promote the Savoy-Casello Combo debut

album *That Rock ‘N’ Roll Rhythm!* It’s a superb record, and if some were wondering if the Ameripolitan folk slightly jumped the gun in handing out the 2019 award, it fully vindicates their judgement.

Yet Savoy’s entry into the music industry came completely by chance, even though music was in her family, and she has sung for most of her life. Born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, two of her elder brothers are members of the R&B group Next, who enjoyed success on the US singles and album charts in the late 90s and into the