

HUNDREDS OF BANDS are forming in this city every month but for most, the likelihood of making it out of the basement to the stage, to a recording studio or to a sustainable lifestyle via their music — is minimal. That is, unless you have fortunate opportunities to bring your music to the next level.

While The Other Half are still a very young band, they've been afforded some extra attention because of their lead singer, Leslie Carter. With brothers Nick (Backstreet Boys) and Aaron having their own successful pop careers, Leslie has branched out to make her own style of music her own way. But make no mistake, The Other Half are a real band — with Carter, D.J. Porter, and Mike Ashton — that are hoping to take on the world from their current home base of Hamilton.

"It was definitely something new and something that I hadn't tried before so I had to at least see what it was like," reasons Carter on her part in the hit reality show, *House Of Carters* that documented the lives of her and her four siblings over seven weeks as Nick worked on bringing back Backstreet. "The whole TV thing — if you've got the opportunity to do something like that, why not? How many people get to be on television and be in that kind of light?"

"I try to get away from [the Backstreet Boys/pop star affiliation] as much as possible because I don't want to use that to get anywhere in life but I can't get away from who I am. I grew up in that family; all that's different were that people were following us around with cameras."

As well as all of the beautiful people, the high drama, family quarrels, LA partying and late night recording, the show — on the E! Channel and on *MuchMusic* — also offered millions of people to be introduced to Leslie's band, The Other Half — all before they even had an official recording or solidified the line up. This kind of scrutiny might destroy lesser bands, but the built-in audience has created a huge demand for everything Leslie.

"I came back from Canada to do the show and I'd left my band back in Canada, but I thought why not use this perfect opportunity to

bring them down to California and feature the band," reasons Carter. "We had been working so hard just developing ourselves and writing — it was just a great opportunity and that's when my business hat came on."

"Leslie, Mike and I have become such close friends that it's almost like we are a family, so when she was down there with her blood relatives she needed that sense of home again," adds Porter.

So while fans might be familiar with the band, the story of how Leslie Carter has become a Steel Town resident might not. As luck would have it, Carter's mother, who once managed young Leslie, had developed ties with some Canadians and suggested that Leslie try to learn to better express herself in song and maybe even form a band in Southern Ontario — and the rest was history.

"I had never written any songs so it was kind of like a little project," recalls Carter. "It was a really eye opening experience and the people here, the music scene here; it's the most important thing in Canada. I just love the whole scene here, that's why I like to stay here."

The wealth of talent would be sifted through bringing in ex-Haddonfield drummer Ashton, then Mohawk College Music grad Porter and later two more Mohawk grads — Kirk Harber on guitar and Sean Smit on bass. The experience would forever change Carter's perspective.

"I tried taking her out to the scene that I knew and we'd go see acts like Dallas Green," adds Ashton on the gelling of the band. "We'd go to places like the Bovine Sex Club in Toronto, just to give her an idea of the music scene and I guess this scene was a little rawer than the scene she'd been accustomed to."

"I'd grown up with a pop star brother and that's all I'd ever seen," reasons Carter. "The difference is that it's just such a big, sparkly and clean pop act. What I was seeing in the smaller clubs, it's just a lot more intimate and people are spitting on you. That's raw. The bottom up,

that's what we're doing."

With her experiences and influences widening, Carter and The Other Half are immersing themselves in a variety of local culture. Now fans of the likes of Finger 11, Dallas Green, Dear Jane, I... and others, their musical scope is also expanding. The band is solidifying and galvanizing their process and songwriting with a more honest perspective.

"A lot of times with the polished stuff you're not really allowed to express how you truly feel," reasons Ashton on the songwriting process.

"They're teaching me a lot," smiles Carter. "How to really bring my true emotions out through words because I've censored myself in a lot of ways — coming from the lifestyle I was in, you couldn't say certain things."

"We went from a cookie cutter kind of outline of a pop star to a real genuine feel, a genuine sound, a genuine band," underscores Porter.

So while opportunities have come about, some are definitely better than others. Fans might remember her song *Like Wow* from the *Shrek* movie soundtrack but that pop world has less and less to do with this woman, and this band hoping to create important music.

"I did that song when I was 12 or 13 and I'm 20 now," clarifies Carter. "This is a serious band with serious songs. We try to write a song every day or every other day and about issues that I'd really like to talk about — things you don't normally talk about maybe. And I have a lot of anger built up inside."

"Yes, she does," chimes in Ashton and Porter erupting into laughter.

Carter's darker side is somewhat tempered by her band mates, underscoring their growth as friends and as a band. With Hamilton based Rob Rapiti as their new manager, they've sequestered themselves locally to record their debut at Mastermind Studios.

So even though millions have seen the band on television and hundreds becoming the legions of devotees at The Gown And Gavel

where members have been known to frequent — the band offers an official introduction to their real lives and their very real music with the debut Canadian performance of The Other Half this weekend.

Fan clubs, industry and maybe even family — well, at least her extended family from the Southern Ontario area — are all set to be in attendance. With the concert to be filmed, and a media blitz expected over the next year, the debut CD from The Other Half is still at least a year away but this weekend comes another chance to shine.

"The record we want to put out is going to be a lot more upbeat and fun. Just great summer songs with great stories," offers Carter.

"We want to throw some anthems in there and just make it fun as well — there are some serious songs but you don't always want to be serious," interjects Porter. "So it's like Hamilton, that's diverse."

"I think it's going to be an interesting mix," adds Ashton. "Essentially, a band is when you put four minds in one room and see what you create so with Leslie's background in R&B and pop and with everything she's got and my background in aggressive music and DJ's background in punk and pop — everything comes together to make something new."

"We're not trying to put out something like everybody else so we're taking our time to develop what each of us has to offer and see what we can come up with," concludes Carter. "After this show, we plan on going heavily into the studio for a month and making a really good album."

"We are definitely going to rock the house," laughs Carter. "We are going to be bringing the party. We've got a lot of people coming from all over the place to this show. I've been getting kind of nervous counting down the days but I'm also getting really excited."

"We plan on putting our best foot forward and doing our jobs first of all but we will be having fun. It's like a job because you would take a job seriously and not take it for granted and you wouldn't blow your opportunities when they're given to you." **V** [RIC TAYLOR]

LIVE
THE OTHER HALF
 Saturday May 5,
 All ages, \$10
 CASBAH
 306 Main St. W.
 905.521.4441
 theotherhalfmusic.com

Half

