



## **BYRON CAGE**

### ***MEMOIRS OF A WORSHIPPER***

“If people really want to know me, then listen to my music - my words especially,” says Byron Cage, one of the biggest names in urban praise and worship music. “If you want to know what my beliefs are, I always put that in my music.”

The man who became known for his Top Ten worship anthems like “The Presence of the Lord” and “I Will Bless the Lord” is pouring his heart out in his new and ninth CD, “Memoirs of a Worshiper.” The eleven-track CD, recorded at Chicago’s Christ Universal Temple, pairs Cage with producer Aaron Lindsey (*who is known for productions with Israel Houghton and Marvin Sapp, and who also produced Cage’s 2009 “Faithful To Believe” CD*) and showcases his personal desire for a deeper relationship of worship with God.

“I kind of chronicle my journey in ministry and it shows people basically where I’ve been,” Cage says of the new set. “My last CD was recorded when the Recession began and the struggles people began to go through made me write a little different on that CD. It was the type of album to build up the faith of God’s people. For this new CD, I collectively put songs together with Aaron Lindsey that I felt would be the next level of worship. The times are changing; the sounds of keyboards and instruments are changing. What I really wanted to bring out on this CD was to share with everybody what I’m writing and what’s in my memoirs. Although I’m still giving the message of faith and a message of hope, this is a stronger worship album. Some of the songs that I selected are so strong worship wise that it’s really a vertical message that I’m not talking about my problems anymore. I’m talking about God who can solve all problems.”

Instead of opening with a pulsating praise song to lift the audience to its collective feet, Cage kicks off with the majestic praise ballad, “Gratitude.” The song was birthed during a Tom Joyner Fantastic Voyage cruise. “On Saturday night Fantasia and Robin Thicke were performing and then Sunday it was me, Tye Tribbett, Vickie Winans, Bobby Jones, and me” Cage recalls. “So, Tye said, ‘let’s go see Fantasia’s show because I know she’s gonna go to church.’ So, we went and she sang her hits and everybody was having a good time and then she sang this line from ‘Thank You, Lord’ and the place came unglued. They were bowing down and worshipping and crying. I was like are you serious?”

I went back to my room and wrote that song in hopes of getting Fantasia to record it with me. She wasn't available for the recording so I had a young lady named Mumen Ngenge from the youth choir at my church do it. She's done backgrounds on my last two records and I've been grooming her, so she was ready and did an amazing job."

From there, the energy explodes on the rousing "Out of Them All" (written by Cage and Lindsey) and "Victory, an up-tempo Latin-styled rocker that was penned by Derrick Starks and Lindsey. Fred Hammond lends his distinctive voice to the latter track. Both tunes are supported by Cage's zealous backing ensemble to the sheer delight of the audience that can be heard clapping and calling out during the performances. As Hammond left the stage, Cage commanded the gathering to, "Look at your neighbor and say: Tweet that! Say they're praising God in Chicago, IL tonight!"

The next segment intensified the spirit of praise. The fluttering piano keys, rolling bass and echoing backing vocals set the stage for the pop flavored paean, "Mighty One" which segued into "Great and Mighty," a rousing worship track that has already reached the Billboard Hot Gospel Songs Top 20 chart. Cage discovered "Great and Mighty" four years ago when a friend sent him a copy of it. He instantly liked it and taught it to the music department at Ebenezer A.M.E. Church in Ft. Washington, MD where Cage has served as minister of music for 15 years. The praise team started singing it at church. "We saw the power of the Lord come in to the service," he remembers. "So, then we didn't sing it for a couple of years and when I started working on this album, I thought about it and said I want to put that on the CD."

Pastor Charles Jenkins of Chicago's Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church then steps in for a motivating sermonette that had the crowd rapturously rejoicing before Cage dusted off Rudolph Stanfield & New Revelation's soul-stirring 1990 classic, "He's Good Anyhow" with a vocal assist from former BET Sunday best contestant Clifton Ross - whose voice ricocheted into a register that can shatter glass on demand. "I've been a fan of Rudy's for many years," says Cage. "Choirs used to sing that and I said, 'I'm going to reach back and do that song.' When Rudy came to the recording, I said: 'Man, I hope you like the new part I added to the song. I put a new vamp on it' and it was one of the highlights of the night. We got a big shout out of that because the song brings you right to church. "

Re-titled as "Good Anyhow," the melody morphed into the feverish, double-timed running number, "My Refuge, My Strength." Cage then leads the faithful into a mid-tempo finger snapping praise track entitled, "Throne" that carries a gurgling organ and retro soul groove. Arguably, the most pretty and sentimental track on the CD is, "You," a piano-based ballad with soft background vocals. "I wrote that song at four o'clock in the morning," Cage recalls. "I started by playing the music. I got up on the piano and played this little chord over and over again. I went back to bed and then got up ten minutes later because that melody haunted me and then I wrote the lyrics. It was my way of conveying that my total reliance is on God. In it, I sing that even though sometimes I've fallen short, I've never been forsaken. It's just a song that builds up to this huge shout and this triumphant proclamation that it's all because of you, God."

Gerald Haddon, who penned Isaac Carree's recent #1 hit "In The Middle," wrote "Troubles Away" and the aforementioned "Mighty One" with his wife, Tammy. "Troubles Away" is a fusion of '60s dance and a Caribbean carnival that instantly puts listeners into a festive mood. "I wanted to end the night with a fun song that would let people know you can dance your troubles away," Cage says. "I do believe that you can praise your troubles away. Your heart can't be filled with praise and depression at the same time."

Cage's evolved perspective on the power of praise dates back to his youth. Born in Grand Rapids, MI - the second of three children - he was friendly with the DeBarge R&B singing family and his uncle Bishop James Abney taught him choir conducting at an early age. Cage's father was a director of Veteran Affairs for the State of Michigan and his mother was a trainer for Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

Cage's mother and the Motor City provided a rich musical outlet for Cage. He started playing the sax but switched to the piano. "My mom and I were at a funeral home waiting for a wake to start and she was back there talking to someone and I got up on the organ and started playing," he says. "She asked me when I learned to play the organ. I said it was something I learned in school. So there was a piano in the fellowship hall at church and I was always on that playing so my mom finally got me an upright piano when I was 13." He basically taught himself to play by mimicking his favorite records and learning by ear. Cage also had a string of mentors who would become famous in their own rights such as Thomas "Maestro" Whitfield who took Cage under his wings. "When he moved to Detroit Donald Vails was my minister of music [at Greater Grace Temple on Seven Mile & Schaffer Streets]," Cage adds. "Fred Hammond played bass guitar, Charles Ellis who is now Bishop Ellis was on drums. Mitch Jones from Commissioned was in the choir. I played the organ, directed and sang. It was a wonderful and enriching experience for me."

With solid musical training under his belt, Cage moved to Atlanta to attend Morehouse College and began to assist the music departments of various ministries before launching his recording career with AIR Records in 1994. Although, those early CDs performed well, it wasn't until the new millennium that Cage became a household name in black church circles with hits such as "The Presence of the Lord," "Royalty," "Broken, But I'm Healed" and "I Will Bless the Lord." After a path that has had its share of twists and turns, Cage feels he's where God meant for him to be. "The most rewarding thing to me, no matter where I go in the world, is to have people approach me and begin to talk about the songs... All the awards on my mantle are great but those things are just trophies. What really matters is when I leave this earth was there anything that I did that was impactful enough to give God the type of glory to point people to Him? Did the songs bring hope to hopeless situations? If so, then I know I've done what God called me to do."

###

June 2012

# BYRON CAGE

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND DISCOGRAPHY

### CD ALBUMS

- 2012 Memoirs of a Worshipper (Verity/N/A)
- 2009 Faithful to Believe (Verity/#3 Top Gospel Albums)
- 2007 Live at the Apollo: The Proclamation (Gospocentric/#3 Top Gospel Albums)
- 2005 An Invitation to Worship (Gospocentric/#2 Top Gospel Albums)
- 2003 The Prince of Praise (Gospocentric/#4 Top Gospel Albums)
- 2002 Byron Cage (Gospocentric#4 Top Gospel Albums)
- 1996 Transparent in Your Presence (AIR Records/ #5 Top Gospel Albums)
- 1995 Dwell Among Us (AIR Records/ #N/A)

### RADIO SINGLES

- 2012 Great And Mighty (#17 Hot Gospel Songs)
- 2010 I Give You Praise (#13 Hot Gospel Songs)
- 2009 Faithful to Believe (#11 Hot Gospel Songs)
- 2008 Royalty (#11 Hot Gospel Songs)
- 2007 With All of My Might (#12 Hot Gospel Songs)
- 2007 Broken But I'm Healed (#4 Hot Gospel Songs)
- 2006 I Will Bless The Lord (#1 Hot Gospel Songs)
- 2005 Give Thanks (with Israel & New Breed/#24 Hot Gospel Songs)
- 2004 There is A Name (N/A)
- 2003 The Presence of the Lord is Here (N/A)

### STELLAR AWARDS

- 2011 Male Vocalist of the Year
- 2007 Song of the Year: I Will Bless the Lord
- 2004 Male Vocalist of the Year
- 2004 CD of the Year: Live at New Birth Cathedral
- 2004 Song of the Year: The Presence of the Lord is Here
- 2004 Contemporary CD of the Year: Live at New Birth Cathedral
- 2004 Producer of the Year: Live at New Birth Cathedral

### GRAMMY NOMINATION

- 2006 Gospel Album of the Year: An Invitation to Worship

### SOUL TRAIN AWARD

- 2004 Best Gospel Album: The Prince of Praise