

“Where it all Begins” - The Rebirth of Lalah Hathaway

Written by Grace Boateng
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Every once in a while you come across a song, a lyric, or even a distinct sound that is powerful enough to make you fall in love with music again. This happened to me when I listened to Lalah Hathaway's, highly anticipated new album, "Where it all begins." Lalah invites you into her world with warm, smooth alto tones that tell the story of each track. This collection of songs showcases Lalah's vocal ability, growth, and vision.

"This album is a tribute to my parents" Lalah says. "Being the daughter of two musicians, I was exposed to music early. I don't even remember music not being a part of my life." Lalah is the daughter of Donny Hathaway who is arguably one of the greatest musicians of our time. His music continues to influence musicians today. This legacy could seem like a lot of pressure but Lalah expressed to me that she doesn't feel pressure. "When I first started, people would ask me what it's like being in the shadow of your father. It never ever seemed like a shadow to me. It always felt like a big, bright, shining light. It happens to be who I am and I'm very proud of that."

That pride was incorporated into the album artwork. The album artwork is a collage of her father's album covers where both she and her mother are superimposed within the confines of her signature hairstyle. The artwork not only pays homage to her father's work, but it is also symbolic of her "beginning."

Her creative process varies as her inspiration comes from different sources. She started "When it all Begins" with a live session at Capital Records. Lalah describes the session as "the most beautiful start you can have to a record." She recruited equally gifted songwriters such as Rahsaan Patterson, Vidal Davis, and Lee Hutson, Jr. to help her with this album. Together they produced a well written kaleidoscope of musical colors and moods. Lalah provides a variety of tempos and lush layers of harmonies that paint each song with a unique colorful pattern. You will hear upbeat, percussive tracks like her first single "If You Want To" and guitar driven track "Wrong Way." You will also find classic "bluesy" ballads like my personal favorite "Lie to Me" which Lalah describes as her modern day version of "I Can't Make You Love Me." Another wonderful part of this album is that she covers the hit "You Were Meant For Me," a song made popular by her father. True fans will appreciate her new arrangement of "I'm Coming Back," a song that first appeared on her 1990 debut album.

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She tries not to categorize her sound into a specific genre. Whether you heard Lalah singing gospel music with Richard Smallwood or jazz with Joe Sample, know that she draws inspiration from all types of music. “I’m really lucky because I know the business of music can sometimes take you out of the music and that has yet to happen to me.”

Lalah is already on the road touring. Whether she is writing, recording in the studio, or on the stage, she enjoys all aspects of being a musician. “They are all different, varying shades of the same thing. There is something extra pristine about being able to have a conversation with other musicians onstage for people to see.”

“Where it all begins” will be available widespread October 18, 2011.

By Grace Boateng, Forward Times Media Correspondent