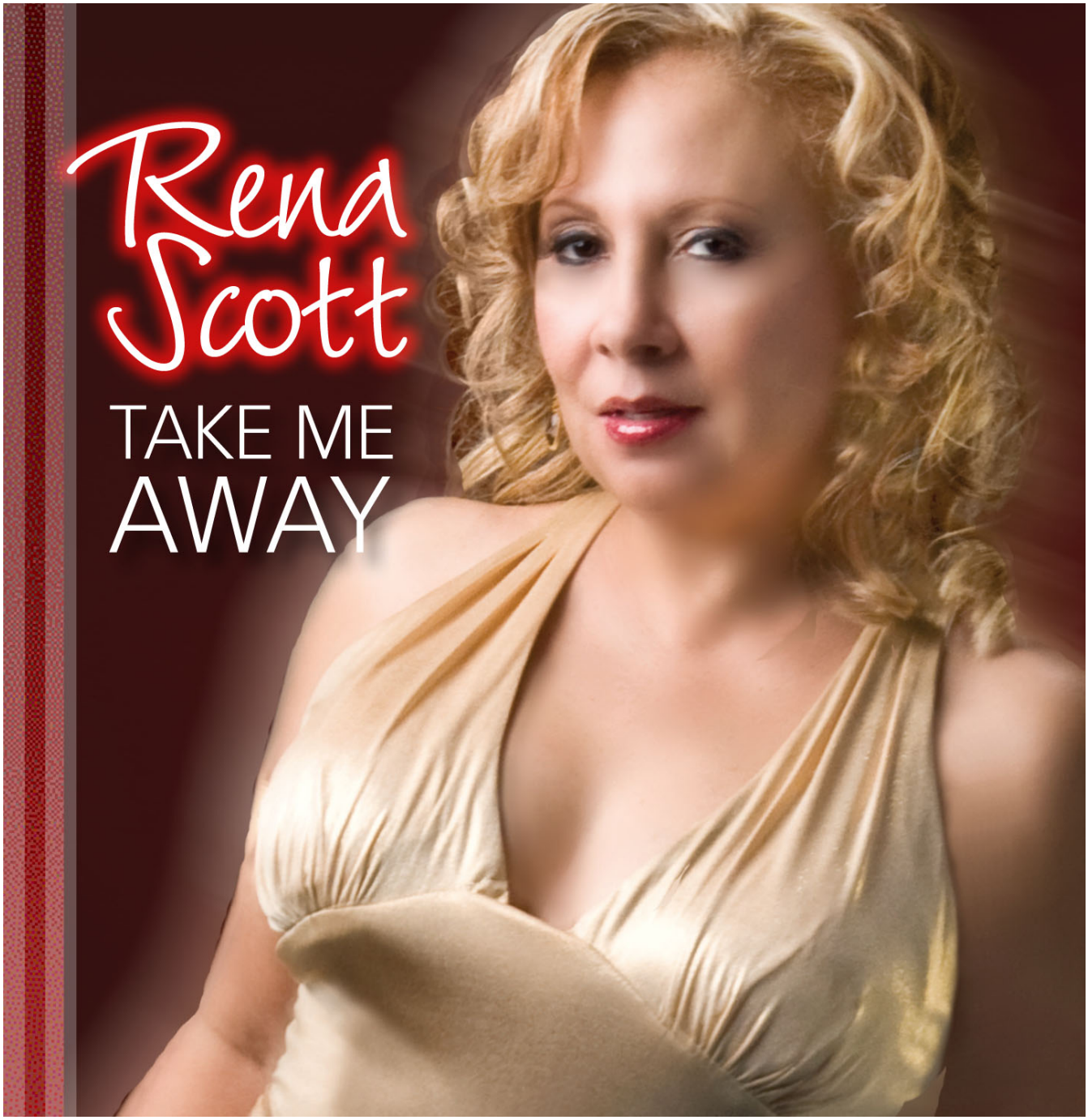
Written by Patricia Turnier
Tuesday, 26 June 2012 15:15



Mrs, Scott is a Detroit native. She started singing at age 12 for her local Baptist congregation. She won her first talent contest when she was 13 via a performance with The Temptations. Soon after, she had two to three gigs per night on weekends at local R&B clubs. She opened for well-known performers such as The Temptations (aforementioned), The Four Tops, The Originals and many others. She recorded her first song, “I Just Can’t Forget That Boy”, while

she was in high school. The Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin (also a Detroit native), made sure that giving her amazing voice Rena Scott would become her third backup singer for a few gigs. This experience allowed Rena Scott at 18 to perform for audiences at Carnegie Hall, etc. The young chanteuse loved the experience especially performing with an orchestra backing up one of her childhood idol. This opportunity fueled her musically and spiritually. People started to call her “Little Aretha”. She also did backup on Franklin’s albums. Throughout the years, Rena Scott developed her own style, performing for crowds of over 50,000 people. The language barrier never mattered since music is a universal expression. Her public doesn’t need to understand English to be touched by her powerful soulful voice. In fact, music creates feelings and emotions that need no translation. She has appeared at top R&B and Jazz festivals in the U.S. and Europe, including the famous Montreux Jazz festival and Montrose musical events. She also performed with George Benson, Natalie Cole, Ashford & Simpson, etc.

In 1979, Mrs. Scott did a duet with Michael Henderson , “Take Me I’m Yours”, from his hit album *The Nighttime*. More than one million singles were sold. After touring with Henderson on the strength of their hit single in 1980, his record company, Buddha Records (which had other artists such as Gladys Knight), signed her to a record deal. She recorded her first album, the half disco (with spicy sounds with a great bass), half R&B ballad,
Come On Inside
. The album was produced by the R&B team James Mtume and Reggie Lucas, former jazz musicians who scored pop hits for Stephanie Mills, Roberta Flack & Donnie Hathaway, Phyllis Hyman and Lou Rawls.

After the bankruptcy of Buddha Records, Scott left Detroit and made a pit stop in Las Vegas -- where she did shows at Caesar's Palace and the Landmark Hotel -- before settling in L.A. to seek new recording opportunities. Before hooking up with The Crusaders, she began writing songs with veteran Producer and songwriter Skip Scarborough, who penned singles for LTD, Anita Baker, Earth, Wind & Fire and many other artists. In 1989, Scott re-emerged on Sedona Records with *Love Zone*, whose first single, "Do That To Me One More Time", hit the Billboard Hot Black Singles chart. The follow-up, "I Could Use A Kiss", also got extensive airplay and became her first video.

Later, Scott once again fell victim to label traumas three failed deals in all-before starting a fruitful long-term business relationship with songwriter/producer Lloyd Tolbert. Afterward, she emerged with her own independent label, Amor Records. Her label debut, “Let Me Love You”, is distributed by KES Distribution since 2007. Its title cut was featured in two key scenes of the HBO Cinemax film *Love and Action in Chicago*, starring Courtney Vance, Regina King, Kathleen Turner and Ed Asner. The songs on the
Let Me Love You

CD (released in 2005) reflect the growth of the songstress through her experiences, and those of people she knows. "All of these songs, ˜A Love Thang,' ˜Good To Me,' ˜Plaything,' ˜I'll Keep Coming Back,' tell the story of life and love with its joys and vicissitudes. The classic ballad “Remember” from the CD was number 6 on the R&B chart singles’ sales. “A Love Thang” was number 1 for two weeks. Both songs stayed among the top 25 for 18 weeks.

The album, *Take Me Away*, was released at the end of 2010. It contains singles that Mrs. Scott co-wrote and co-produced with Lloyd Tolbert. It also includes covers of some of her all-time favorites like “Joy and Pain” and “Don’t Ask My Neighbors”. This CD has good instrumental arrangements with smooth jazz layers. Mrs. Scott’s music embodies the soul sound classiness of the seventies, eighties and beyond. Scott is gifted with talent, drive, and passion to continue rising to the top. Throughout her career, She has done commercials for companies like Levi’s 501 Jeans and Sunny Delight. She did background vocals for Diana Ross (Various Hits), Sarah Vaughn, and so on. She was an International Spokesperson for Harvey’s Bristol Cream. *Mega Diversities had the pleasure to speak to Mrs. Scott. Here, the songstress talks about the rerelease of her 1979 album "Come On Inside" and about her musical journey.*

PATRICIA TURNIER TALKS TO RENA SCOTT:

P.T. When did you discover you had talent for singing?

R.S. I was 12-years-old. However, I started singing when I was 5 or 6. My parents were going through domestic violence at the time and it had a profound effect on me. Singing was like therapy for me. I used to sing in front of the mirror and I was crying at the same time. I sang also at church while expressing myself to God. At 12, I went to a Baptist church in Detroit where I am from. My cousin sang at the choir which I joined and I sung. We used to do this all day long. One day, the director was singing at the piano and I accompanied him. One of the lead singers of the choir who was fantastic sang and I started to do the same. Everybody stopped singing and listened to me. They were impressed. This was really the defining moment when I realised that I had talent. They said, wow you can sing. I responded, I can? [laughs]. Later that day, they put me up there for the evening service where I had to sing the song. I had a great reaction from the audience. There are a lot of emotions in a Baptist church and they were happy to hear me sing. So, this is really how I discovered that singing was my thing.

At 13, I entered a big talent contest called *Every Year* organized by the radio station WCHB. It was a big annual event held at the Fox Theater from Detroit where Motown artists used to perform. I was picked over 500 people. In addition, I was the second youngest. My mother started managing me at 14. I built my first fan base in Detroit and recorded my first album at 15 with the label Uptight Productions. They signed me for three singles and Epics took them over afterward. My career took off from that time.

P.T. When you were a child who inspired you musically and why?

R.S. I would definitely say Aretha Franklin. I used to sing all her songs. She came out of the church like me. I love her talent. People called me little Aretha [laughs] when I started my career but with time, I had to find my own distinctive style by pushing forward. Every artist is unique. To find my own style, I started to listen to The Staples Singers, Gladys Knight, Patti Labelle, Barbara Streisand. When I was older, I listened to jazz artists such as Nancy Wilson and Billie Holiday. I wanted to be versatile. It was important for me to be able to sing anything. This is how I developed my own style. Nevertheless, Aretha Franklin was the number one mentor for me. I have a very close connection with her. When I started to work with her, it was amazing. To summarize, I was influenced by soul and R&B artists.

P.T. You often shared with the media your love for the Detroit sound. You describe this city as a long time enclave of talent endowed with pride and determination. You are a Detroit-born songstress and you opened for many Motown stars, such as The Temptations. Tell our worldwide readers what the Motown sound means to you.

R.S. Detroit to me was considered the original. Historically, we had people who decided to migrate from the South to Detroit for work in the car industry and be part of the music scene. My grandparents moved to this city. The name, a portmanteau of *motor* and *town*, is a nickname for Detroit and this is how the trademark of Berry Gordy's company was created. The Motown sound is la crème de la crème. It was very soulfoul with The Supremes, The Temptation and so on. My heart belongs to those golden days of R&B and is the foundation of my identity as an artist. To me, the Motown sound came originally from gospel music and became the basis of the Northern Soul music. The Motown Sound is defined by its distinctive characteristics which comprise the use of tambourine with drums, bass and guitar instrumentation, a specific melodic and chord structure. When you say that you are from Detroit during this era, people knew you sang well and had a great artistic foundation.

P.T. Why was it important for you to release anew your 1979 album *Come On Inside* and how has it been received by the public so far?

R.S. It was a wonderful surprise for me. It wasn't planned to be rereleased the album. In 1979, CDs didn't exist. So, it is great that it has been digitally *remastered* for the CD. They brought the best musicians in the world to work on the CD. I love the beats, the horns. Funkytowngrooves Records reissue everybody in the industry. I was honored that they wanted to reissue my first album. I am really grateful. About the fans, even before it was on the market they pre-ordered it. I got great feedback from them. Many fans posted my songs on YouTube. I receive a lot of love from other countries. For instance, a foreign female told me that the song "Remember" from the *Let Me Love You*'s album was played on her mother's grave because she wanted her to hear these words from heaven: "Remember, I love you and I thank you for being there for me".

P.T. Wow, this is thorough!

R.S. These stories touch my heart. I can't forget these comments. I am moved to see how fans feel about my songs. It is important for me as an artist to give substance to the public through

my work.

P.T. What message do you want the listeners to take away from *Come On Inside*?

R.S. That quality music never dies. As I said, we offered to the public the sound of great musicians on the album. We hear keyboards, guitars, bass, percussion, string, synthesizer and so on. The team did a fantastic top notch job with the *remastering*. I am very proud of that.

P.T. On your album "Take Me Away", you sing a song entitled *I Thank God For You* with your daughter. The lyrics that you co-wrote with Lloyd Tolbert are beautiful. Talk to us about the message of this song. In addition, share with us the experience of doing a duet with your daughter.

R.S. Tolbert did all the music arrangement on the album. He is amazing and has a lot of experience. He worked with great artists as a producer, such as Lionel Richie (for the *Rena issance*
album). Lloyd Tolbert sent me the track
I Thank God For You
. After listening to it, I decided to pen lyrics about my relationship with my daughter. Her name is Nina and I am proud of her. She is working in a studio on her first CD and continues her studies full-time. The experience with her was fantastic for the song. The members of my family cried when they heard it for the first time, likewise for our closest friends.

P.T. This song is really special. I think that it has the most beautiful lyrics that I ever heard regarding a mother-daughter relationship.

R.S. Oh, thank you! The lyrics are real, genuine and introspective. My daughter is grown and she is spreading her wings. I realise that. However, I will always be her mom and I always will be there for her. This will never change no matter how old she gets. This is the message that I wanted to deliver in our song. We recorded a sincere single about our lifelong relationship. It captures the emotions that we have for each other. I call it my official Mother's Day song [laughs]. I believe also that other people can relate to the song.

P.T. On the same album, talk to us about the single "Dr. Feelgood" which was written by the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin, and T. White.

R.S. This goes back to the time when I was doing clubs. The crowd used to go crazy when I sang it. I really wanted it on my CD. I love the blues roots in it. My family loves the blues and I used to sing a lot of it when I was younger. I really enjoy this style. It is a spot-on homage to Aretha Franklin.

P.T. Would you be interested in doing a gospel album in the future?

R.S. Absolutely! I would love to do that in the next two years. I always have been part of some church. It fuels me musically and spiritually to sing gospel. It is in my soul and I have to do it.

P.T. Is there an artist you would be interested to collaborate with in the future?

R.S. I have people in mind for my gospel album and people for other projects. I would like to record duets with Aretha Franklin, Robin Thicke and Brian McKnight and Charlie Wilson. I would also love to have Robin Thicke and Brian McKnight produce an album on me one day in the near future. In addition, I would enjoy to record a gospel album with J. Moss, Mary Mary, Tye Tribbett and Kirk Franklin. To finish, I am interested in performing with a Big Band and a full orchestra.

[redacted] www.amazon.com , iTunes, www.CDBaby.com and www.soulbroth