

Written by Patricia Turnier  
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The dress is from [Voluptuos Inc.](#) and the photographer is Margaret Malandrucolo

[Divine Brown](#) was born in Canada from Jamaican parents and grew up in Toronto. She comes from a family of twelve kids and is the middle child. Growing up, she loved hearing artists such as Chaka Khan, Aretha Franklin and [Deniece Williams](#). Divine Brown started singing in the [80s](#). More precisely, she began singing at age four and performing at age twelve. Therefore, she has been on stage with The Temptations, George Benson and the rapper KRS. Moreover, she opened for Brian Adams, Jill Scott and [Erykah Badu](#). Her first album *Divine Brown* was on the market in 2005 via Universal Music Canada. Most of the songs were penned by Brown. The single "Old Skool Love" from this CD became the highest on the Canadian charts for a debut from an R&B performer. It reached the first position on the MuchMoreMusic chart; it was a top 10 for the MuchMusic (the Canadian MTV) chart. "Old Skool Love" became a certified Gold seller.

In addition, the CD received two Canadian Urban Music Awards in 2005 for the categories of: New Artist of the Year and Single of the Year (specifically for Old Skool Love). Noteworthy, her first album, 2005's *Divine Brown*, was produced by rapper/producer Saukrates. Moreover, the Canadian radio hit "Old Skool Love" became a hit in multiple radio Canadian stations like CJFM. [Drake](#) collaborated on the remix of "Twist My Hair" in 2006. This single was also part of *Divine Brown*. People can hear Brown's great vocal abilities in songs such as "My Cryin' Eyes" and "Warrior" in her first

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album. "Without You" is another nice single with jazz rhythm from this album. "Single Mamma" (another song from this LP) talks about the sacrifices of working single mothers.

In 2006, Brown was nominated for two Juno Awards: "[R&B/Soul](#) Recording of the Year" for her first album, and "New Artist of the Year." Brown's second CD

*The Love Chronicles*

released in 2008 ranked at number 22 on the Canadian Album Chart. It also reached the Top 15 on the 2010 U.S. Billboard Dance Chart.

*The Love Chronicles*

contains the hit single, "Sunglasses", a spin-off of the Corey Hart 80s' classic "

[Sunglasses at Night](#)

". This song features guests Kardinal Offishal and

[Nelly Furtado](#)

. It reached the Top 15 on the American Billboard Dance Chart in 2010. "Sunglasses" also became a Top 25 hit on the Canadian Hot 100. Circa 2008, Divine Brown performed with

[Youssou N'Dour](#)

for a free concert during the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) to promote his movie *I Bring What I Love*

In 2009, she was nominated at the Gala Soba in Quebec for these four categories: best Anglophone R&B/Soul artist of the year, best Anglophone single of the year, best Anglophone video of the year and best Anglophone album of the year. Still in 2009, Brown was again nominated for two Juno awards: "Single of the Year" for the up-tempo song "Lay It on the Line," and "R&B/Soul Recording of the Year" for *The Love Chronicles*. She won for the last category. Divine Brown's third album, *Something Fresh* (2013) is characterized by a mix of dance, reggae and R&B.

Three years ago, for Black History Month, one of Canada's greatest MCs, [Maestro Fresh Wes](#) --labeled "The Godfather of Canadian

[hip hop](#)

"--paid tribute to several iconic political and musical heroes in the video of his single "

[Timeless](#)

." Divine Brown is featured in the video, which finishes with an inspiring quote from the late Nelson Mandela. In 2016, Divine Brown was part of the cast for the musical "Little Shop of Horrors" which started on International Women's day, March 8. Throughout her career, Brown was part of off-Broadway productions such as "Mama I Wanna Sing!", the Toronto production of "Rent" and "Ain't Misbehavin". Furthermore, she performed in other musicals like "Life, Death and the Blues", "Father Comes Home From The Wars 1, 2 and 3" and "The Obeah Opera". Ms. Brown also sang at many musical festivals around the world. Moreover, she was part of an

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interactive documentary series entitled  
*City Sonic*  
, which featured TWENTY Toronto artists. She was featured in  
*The Toronto Star*  
,  
*The Globe and Mail*  
, CBC News,  
*Today's Parent*  
magazine,  
*City Life*  
magazine, etc. She was in  
*RnB*  
magazine last fall.

Philanthropy is important for Divine Brown. Thus, she gets involved in charitable organizations. She contributes to World Vision Canada and its Artist Associates program, which provides financial tours support for performers who convey the message of hope to the stage. In 2013, Brown performed at the Gala of Light fundraiser in support of Street Haven at the Crossroads" (that was founded in 1965) which gives services to homeless females in Toronto. From that experience, the singer remembered how resilient these women were. Divine Brown considers that she has a social obligation as an artist. Her uniqueness and differences set her apart from [the entertainment industry](#)

. She is one of the greatest Canadian vocalists. She does not use coarse language in her songs and never objectifies herself in her videos. Her main musical genres in her body of work are R&B, soul, neo soul and Jazz. On a more personal level, she is the mother of a teenage daughter.

Currently, Divine Brown is evolving as a musician. More specifically, she is a bass player and she recently learned guitar. It is interesting to see that she is developing herself and growing constantly which makes her a true artist. It also shows how she fearlessly embraces challenges. In addition, she has many other artistic interests such as acting. She loves theater. She will be part of a musical this winter entitled "Passing Train" at the Acting Up Stage Company.

Overall, Divine Brown is the real thing. The world can hear her sing a cappella on YouTube and will observe she is a real singer. Her voice is musical without effort, even when she's only speaking. It is awesome! She has a five-octave range ability. So, her voice is multi-layered. Brown also received gold certification for her debut self-titled CD. She won a Juno Award in 2009 for the album *The Love Chronicles* in the category Soul Recording of the Year. This event established her as an important songstress on the Canadian scene. She also got the Juno nominations: Single of the Year"(for "Lay It on the Line" in 2009), R&B Soul Recording of the

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Year (for *Divine Brown* in 2006) and New Artist of the Year (in 2006). Furthermore, she won a SOCAN No. 1 Award. *Divine Brown* has been active as a professional singer since 1997. She has been associated with multiple

[singers](#)

such as Lawrence Gowan., a Canadian artist. She performed in front of thousands while opening shows for Bryan Adams as well as the Backstreet Boys for their Unbreakable Tour in North America in 2008. Her body of work attracts fans of all ages. She wears many hats: she is a lyricist, a singer, a theater performer. She describes herself as an independent R&B, soul, pop, dance artist from Toronto, Canada.

Her latest single “Love Alibi” featuring 80 Empire was released last November on iTunes (the official music video was launched in December 2016) and her new EP *Crazy Love Amplified* will be on the market in February 2017. Thus, people can hear once again the powerful voice of *Divine Brown* in her newest song “Love Alibi”.

*[Here she talks about her professional path and her upcoming album. The interview was conducted on November 22nd 2016 ]* □



**P.T.** Our trilingual webmag is about diversity. You have Jamaican origins. Can you share with us what your Jamaican and Canadian cultures mean to you and how you musically incorporate this heritage in your artistry?

**D.B.** My Caribbean heritage means a lot to me. My family is from Jamaica. I was born in Canada but culturally I have been influenced by several reggae artists and I integrated their musicality in my art. Beres Hammond is definitely an artist that I can name. Very early on, he incorporated R&B and Soul in his reggae. He started this in the seventies. I highly respect him. He had an album entitled *Soul Reggae*, it was really magical and I believe it was thanks to the soul influence. I did cover some reggae songs in my career, like Dennis Brown’s “Singing

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Watching”. I also hold him in high regards. Bob Marley records were played a lot in my household. His music was so conscious and thorough for his era. He was on this earth too shortly but had the time to crossover and created an international influence. His sound had no boundaries and his artistry is ageless. It speaks to limitless generations of music lovers.

**P.T. I went to the five continents and reggae is the most popular Black music worldwide. For instance, in Thailand I saw a nice graffiti of Bob Marley which portrayed him as a legend.**

**D.B.** I am definitely aware of the extent of popularity for this musical form. It is one of the main reasons that makes me proud of my Jamaican heritage. I am talking about how influential reggae music has been for decades. I would like to add that I loved the Grammy-nominated Dennis Brown, considered as one of the major performers of lovers rock, a subgenre of reggae. Bob Marley used to say that he was “the crown prince of reggae”. I hold him in high regard. He has influenced several reggae artists since the late seventies.

About the Canadian heritage, growing up I used to listen a lot to rock and folk. I love Canadian icons such as Joni Mitchell. When I was very young and I heard “Help Me” for the first time, I remember how I felt and I wanted to make music that would transmit inspiring emotions to people like the one I sensed at the time. Joni Mitchell is one of the Canadian artists who inspired me the most because this performer made me feel that it was possible for a female singer to make it internationally.

**P.T. How did you choose your stage name Divine Brown?**

**D.B.** My first pseudonym was Divine Earth Essence. It reflected the way I was feeling at the time, meaning as a mother. It represented my understanding of life. I see a connection between earth and motherhood. The earth gives and sustains life, likewise for women. So, having those words in my stage name made perfect sense to me. My choice was also about my comprehension of existing as a Black woman and internally embracing my identity. “Divine” concerns the gift that was given to me as a female artist. I believe that all my creativity comes from a spiritual place. I wanted to have the name Brown as a recording artist because it is my last name.

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**P.T. When did you make this choice?**

**D.B.** In 2005.

**P.T. I guess that by eliminating the word Earth, it made your stage name shorter.**

**D.B.** Yes but the main reason was to maintain my last name.

**P.T. What is your singing training background? Were you part of a choir in a church, etc.?**

**D.B.** I started to sing in a choir at the age of thirteen. In addition, for eight months I trained at the Royal Conservatory in Toronto with a vocal coach (who provided a classical teaching method) when I was about fourteen. I did this for about eight months. There, I learned fundamental singing techniques to apply. It has represented a great experience for me to this day because it gave me a solid basis on how to use my voice. This education also allowed me to own my craft as a singer.

**P.T. Did you also learn in the conservatory how to be comfortable as a performer on stage?**

**D.B.** No, the knowledge that I received from the conservatory was on a technical level. I started to learn how to perform in theater productions where I got my first professional gig at the age of twelve. It allowed me to grasp how to present myself on stage and how to relate with the public by making sure the audience feels the energy while I portray different characters. Some performers will look at the floor and this breaks the connection with the spectators. I learned to be comfortable on stage and avoid doing this in musical theaters.



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