

Donnie McClurkin's - Bio

For a man who has declared that he may at any moment cease making music to concentrate fully on his passion for ministering, **Donnie McClurkin** can never stay away long from recording profoundly uplifting music for the soul. The evidence: his latest collection *We All Are One (Live in Detroit)* - his breathlessly anticipated first music recording in five years! Along for the momentous celebration are very special guests **CeCe Winans, Yolanda Adams, Mary Mary** and **Karen Clark-Sheard**. Once again, Donnie, his singers and musicians share the joy of God's bounty - live before an on-fire congregation where platinum-plus Pastor McClurkin's vocal and testimonial gifts have always shined their brightest.

"I decided to record in Detroit after much prayer. I put a lot of thought into the cities we record," Donnie shares. "My mentor Andrae Crouch made one of his best CDs live in London, so I did the same thing some 20 years afterwards (resulting in the platinum *Live in London...and More* CD which included Donnie's now classic anthem "We Fall Down"). I recorded my CD *Again* in California because my first time ever being given a platform in someone else's church was 1982 in Los Angeles at West Angeles Church of God and Christ. Recording in Detroit this time goes without saying because that's home! I was there for 13 years and was a charter member at Perfecting Church which was founded by Marvin Winans. Even with Detroit's tough transitions and hard situations, the church has always been the mainstay that holds everything together. By bringing this recording to Detroit and bringing the churches together there, we can aid in the healing of that city."

The themes of the 12-song *We All Are One* are of unity and tolerance. Donnie explains, "Jesus said, 'A house divided against itself cannot stand,' yet we remain disconnected: Republicans and Democrats, Blacks, Whites, Yellows and Browns, Baptists and Methodists, Lutherans and Episcopalians... Where is the unity? Coming from a religious background, I was taught to judge harshly, but my thinking now is, 'Let God do the judging so that I may learn how to love and understand the ways in which we are all connected.' I believe that lesson of compassion and fellowship will ultimately be learned by the young ones coming behind me. For my song 'We All Are One,' I brought in **Asaph Ward** - one of the greatest producers in gospel music - and we came up with a 'World Beat' to unite the masses. At the end of the song, adult voices fade into children's voices singing, 'We all are one in The Lord,' driving home the point that you have to come to Him as a child."

We All Are One (Live in Detroit) is a boldly eclectic collection from McClurkin, moving from the powerfully opener "Trusting in You" and the lilting call and response vibe of "You Are My God and King" (featuring a playful battle of the choir sections on the "Reprise") to the soul-soothing "Let the River Flow" and a duet with the ever-amazing Karen Clark-Sheard for "Wait on The Lord."

Donnie enthuses, "On 'I Choose to Be Dancing,' we incorporated many different feels - hard rock with the guitars and strings for the culture sound, but we kept the rhythm section urban. And on my praise and worship 'Hallelujah Song' - which God gave me on a Sunday when we were all up in church praying - the idea of praising God in a succession of different

languages just came to me at the last second! We sing in Dutch, Spanish and the African language Yoruba. Oshe ba ba means 'Thank you, Father.' "

Among the most profound songs on *We All Are One* is the piano and strings meditation "All We Ask," on which Donnie weaves the testimonies of three different people, verse by verse, immortalizing them in song. Donnie explains, "The first verse is about a young man who came to me trying to find his place in life, the second verse is from my personal story, and the last verse is about my older sister Olivia, who was dying at the time that I wrote the song. She is now deceased. I wouldn't let anyone else play the piano on it because I knew exactly how I wanted the music to be interpreted, but when my sister passed I did not have the strength to use my voice. So I turned 'All We Ask' into a feature for my background singers who have been with me faithfully since 1996 (in order of appearance: **Duwane Starling**; Donnie's younger sister **Andrea Mellini**; **Sherry Maghee** and **Nancey Jackson –Johnson**).

An undeniable standout is "When You Love" which transcends the church to speak about love on an earthly plane. "That's one of my favorites," Donnie shares. "We must remember that God didn't just make us spirit. He made us body, mind and spirit. The song is inspirational - derived from the gospel - but based solely on love...how to love, what to do when you love, how to act when you're in love... It lifts men and women out of the lust that's all over the radio and into commitment, romance, even respecting your elders – the whole gamut! I had to get the ladies CeCe and Yolanda, along with Erica and Tina of Mary Mary, to help me. It's a beautiful song without any risqué, ambiguous or alternative messages. This is simply about the heart of God and how He wants us to learn to love purely."

McClurkin's pure love for the Lord has grown through crippling adversity that ultimately fortified his faith ten-fold. Born November 9, 1959, in Amityville, New York, his childhood home was mired in domestic violence and drug abuse until an aunt who sang with the great **Andrae' Crouch** introduced him to the musical icon who in turn introduced him to his future. Young Donnie played keyboards with his church youth choir before forming the **McClurkin Singers** with relatives and friends in 1979. Following a calling to preach, he never loosened his grasp on music. In 1989 Donnie started the **NY Restoration Choir** and recorded the album **I See A World**, which contained the classic "Speak to My Heart."

Two near-simultaneous events changed McClurkin's life forever. Just as he was appointed as an associate minister at **Marvin Winans'** Perfecting Church in Detroit, he also learned that he'd been stricken with leukemia. While battling the disease, Donnie was signed to Warner Alliance Records as a solo artist where he recorded his pivotal self-titled album, marked by a smooth sophistication in the production that couched his soaring tenor for a series of soul-stirring numbers. Through **BeBe Winans**, media mogul **Oprah Winfrey** learned of Donnie's music and struggle, invited him on her top-rated TV show, a golden opportunity that catapulted his CD to #4 on the gospel charts, recognition beyond the church world and gold + sales. Donnie soon after signed to Verity Records where his first CD, *Live in London and More*, would far surpass his solo debut thanks to secular radio embracing his gracefully reassuring "We Fall Down". The song met with international acclaim, made the Top 40 of Billboard's R&B chart and rocketed past platinum sales of over one million copies sold instantly making Donnie among gospel's best selling artists.

He earned a trophy case full of Dove and Stellar Awards plus other honors including an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Gospel Artist. In 2001 Donnie graduated to establishing his own Perfecting Faith Church in Freeport, New York, all the while continuing

to release the magnificent musical works *Again* (2003) and the double-CD *Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs* (2005) each one garnering the coveted Grammy Award.

Today, McClurkin's commitment to spreading God's word far and wide is most evident in a last minute addition to the *We All Are One* album titled "Purple," composed expressly for Donnie by **Darren Atwater** and performed by his truly inspiring **Soulful Symphony** in Baltimore, MD. "I've known Darren for years," Donnie states. "I was doing a concert in Baltimore with him last year as a guest with his 40-piece orchestra. During rehearsal he introduced this new song of praise and the minute I heard it I went to hollerin'! I asked him what it was. He told me it was called 'Purple' and he'd written it just for me. I loved it so much that even though we were 90% finished with the album, I made room to add this song, which Darren produced himself. Darren Atwater is a genius as an arranger and conductor - manifesting real cultural exchange by bringing classical culture into the gospel environment. He also leads workshops that introduce young African Americans to acoustic instruments and the works of Chopin and Bach without a Pro Tools in sight! It gives them inspiration to maybe pick up a viola or a cello that they may never have experienced within their monoculture."

Still, at the end of the day, Donnie McClurkin has been and always will be a, card carryin' member of the Church of God and Christ (COGIC). Donnie bears witness to this fact via the unfiltered jubilation of his soul on the CD's most exhilarating number, "The Great I Am." "Holy Ghost revival songs are our specialty," Donnie shouts! "I was just over here teaching some of the church members that stopped by how to 'church dance'...and THAT is the song I played! There was a Bishop by the name of Gilbert Patterson who would always bring the old songs up at praise time. I wanted to write a song just like that, so I sat down to the piano, started playing an old-time gospel feel and this song just leapt out of me! When I got to the studio, the group was like, 'This is so corny,'" but I told `em, 'Just sing what I tell you to sing!' That night after Asaph got a hold of the music, and **Trent Phillips** and the band played it like second nature, the energy in the room just exploded!

"I've always been in awe of God," Pastor Donnie McClurkin concludes. "I didn't want anything on my latest offering, *We All Are One*, to reflect suffering or 'climbing up that mountain' in the way to which traditional Black gospel is accustomed. I wanted to luxuriate in and celebrate in the greatness of God."