

## Yolanda Adams' Bio

Ever since her late-'80s debut *Just As I Am*, Yolanda Adams has triumphantly carried the torch for contemporary gospel and inspirational music via 12 glorious albums. Stunningly beautiful, exceptionally educated, filled with the spirit and blessed with one of the most powerful voices in any genre of music, this Houston-native and one-time school teacher has been a stately beacon of God's light, earning numerous accolades and awards for her shining efforts, including the first American Music Award for Contemporary Gospel Artist, four Gospel Music Association Dove Awards and four National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences Grammy® Awards (including 1999's Best Contemporary Soul Gospel Album for *Mountain High...Valley Low* which featured her secular breakthrough hit "Open My Heart," and 2005's Best Gospel Song for "Be Blessed," for which she was a co-writer).

Now in 2007, Yolanda Adams is making a major transition to Columbia Records, a powerhouse recording company with history dating back a century. "When my contract was up, I seized this opportunity," Adams states. "I needed to come to a place where singers are loved and adored. With everybody from Beyoncé to Celine Dion, Columbia is that place. They really know what to do for people with voices." Steve Barnett of Columbia Records states, "Yolanda Adams is truly the 'first lady of modern gospel' and we are proud to have her on the Columbia roster. Her pioneering blend of R&B, pop and gospel continues to inspire her fans and transform the musical landscape. Her music has brought me a lot of joy over the years and we are all very excited to hear where Yolanda is going next."

It was Barnett who personally suggested that Yolanda begin her relationship at Columbia with a holiday album. The result is *What a Wonderful Time*, a 10-song follow-up to the superstar's Christmas with Yolanda Adams from the year 2000. Her heart-warming new project features five eclectically arranged holiday standards, including a rapturous take on "My Favorite Things" produced by Michael J. Powell (Anita Baker), a joyous reworking of the Motown holiday classic "Give Love on Christmas Day" (on which Yolanda does her best to match young Michael Jackson's original performance), a swingin' version of "Jingle Bells" that would do Duke Ellington proud, and truly evocative versions of the ever-vivid "Do You Hear What I Hear" and "Little Drummer Boy."

Most exciting are the five original pieces that bring both effervescent and

urgent messages for the season and for always. The album's gentle, acoustic guitar driven featured track "Hold On" (produced by Stan Jones, a veteran of gospel veterans that include the Canton Spirituals, Lee Williams and the Williams Brothers) actually transcends the holiday with an affirming message of strength, uplift, and hope worthy of year-round play. In a spoken passage, co-writer Yolanda reaches out to listeners who may be burdened by any number of worries with the challenge, "If you don't believe in yourself, who else will? God has a plan for you." Yolanda elaborates, "We tried to get this song on one of my previous albums but no one quite got the vision. Now everybody loves it! I just performed it on the 'Jerry Lewis Telethon.' Jerry and his sons heard me sing it at rehearsal and were blown away. Then a lady from the audience told me, 'Girl, I was arguing with my husband before I came here, but now that I've heard your song I can tell him everything's gonna be o.k.' I was speechless. People need this message."

Equally moving is the milk of human kindness anthem "Season of Love" (produced by Kay Gee and Gordon Chambers) and - on a lighter, more delightful note - the sunny "Just Because" (penned by Eric Dawkins of the popular contemporary gospel duo Dawkins & Dawkins).

Roaring out of your speakers will be the big band blowout "What a Wonderful Time," produced by Maxx Frank (who also did "Jingle Bells") and featuring the amazing drumming of Calvin Rodgers. "Maxx and I have been friends for over 20 years, Yolanda reminisces. "He was always on the road. We promised each other to one day work together, but that was three kids ago for him and one kid for me. Now we've finally done it. I told him I needed a big band song. He gave me the music and I wrote the lyrics in less than an hour. That's when you know it's right. Everyone really relates to the part where I talk about Granny's homemade rolls."

Finally and possibly the album's most touching composition is "With God," a very special song that Yolanda co-wrote with producer Gregory Curtis – a good friend. "I told Greg I needed some music that is exceptionally warm and inviting because I wanted to write a Christmas song from Mary's perspective. Everyone talks about the angels rejoicing and all. But nobody has gotten the mother's perspective and how the birth would have affected her. I wrote 'With God' to tell Mary's story. It takes you through the entire experience from the angel Gabriel appearing and Mary contemplating, 'How could this all be happening to me?' She resolves that with God all things are possible. No word from God is fallible. So if God tells your spirit he's going to do something for you, He will...above and beyond."

Above and beyond is also a fitting description for the multi-media expansion Yolanda Adams is embarking upon with her boundless talents these days. After an appearance in the acclaimed movie "The Gospel," she has several exciting film offers on the table. Plus, Yolanda has already begun readying her second Columbia Records album – a duets project that will pair her with dynamic ladies of song from across the generations...ladies with initials like NW, NC, AK, MJB, MM and T57 (stay tuned)!

As of Valentine's Day 2007, Yolanda is heard on 14 radio stations (and counting) across the country with her barrier-breaking "The Yolanda Adams Morning Show," a program of her creation and ownership in thrilling conjunction with Radio One. Most of Yolanda's fans know she was once a school teacher, but far less know that she earned her college degree in Radio/Television Broadcasting! Joined by her distinguished co-host Larry Jones and hilarious comedian/character Marcus Wiley, Yolanda's show is all about waking up in the sandbox every morning and having F-U-N! "We have a great morning show," Yolanda says beaming. "It's not a gospel show or an inspirational show, but an overall morning show. I wanted to create a clean alternative morning show for people of faith. People love the way we break down current events and our mix of music ranging from Mariah Carey's "Hero" and George Benson's "Greatest Love of All" to "Waiting for the World to Change" by John Mayer. Sometimes you just want to hear a person you know on the other end of that microphone telling you everything is gonna be alright, which is where I come in. It's also from a female perspective, so all of the mothering, teaching and preaching women inside me combine to make my on-air delivery what it is."

Yolanda Adams was born and raised in Houston, Texas to a mother who studied music, so she grew up well aware of R&B, jazz and classical music as well as gospel. When she debuted on the independent Sounds of Gospel label with *Just As I Am* (1988) and later on gospel's Verity label with *Through the Storm* (1991), *Save the World* (1993), *More Than a Melody* (1995), *Songs From the Heart* (1998) plus live sets in Los Angeles and Washington D.C. (both in 1996), she was often criticized within the Christian community for blending secular music with gospel as well as for her fashion-conscious attire. However, with the shifting tides of music and culture, Yolanda was ultimately embraced as a positive and pro-active presence, and a modern image of faith, attestable by her seven NAACP Image Awards. She went on to be to major label Elektra/Atlantic Records where she blossomed even further with the releases *Mountain High...Valley Low* (1999), *Christmas*

with Yolanda Adams (2000), *The Experience: Live* (2001), *Believe* (2001) and *Day By Day* (2005).

Now on Columbia Records, Yolanda Adams is putting yet another special spin on her newfound affiliation. Yolanda is the smiling face and voice of a new Visa credit card called "The Columbia Card," which will potentially have a very positive effect for church-going believers. "I've been in church all my life," Yolanda reflects, "and I have noticed that some churches are still trying to do traditional fundraisers such as bake sales, car washes and rummage sales that garner little to no extra money. In the world we live in today, our babies can't go door-to-door selling cookies anymore. I thought if the church could get credit or rebates from things that people normally buy anyway – like gas, groceries or dining out - why not have a portion of the proceeds from this card go directly into a fund which the church is totally responsible for. People won't have to write out checks for tithes or offerings. This way we save the children, we save the parents grief, and we build savings funds for our churches."

Gearing up to promote her Columbia debut, *What a Wonderful Time*, Yolanda's eyes are now filled with visions of another wonderful Christmas grounded in her inherent spirits of grace, gratitude and giving. A very big part of that spirit now comes from Yolanda's "darling girl," daughter Taylor Ayanna. "Christmas has changed dramatically now that she's in my life," Yolanda concludes. "I've always been a giver, so Christmas has always been about that. Giving was the whole purpose for Christ's coming to Earth. But knowing that there's this little face that will wake up every Christmas morning, smile and say, 'Oh, Mommy I love you so much' because of my giving to her now is just too precious. It's one thing to be an aunt. It's another thing to be a mother. And I will treasure that experience every Christmas to come."