



TOBYMAC INGNITES A THOUGHT PROVOKING PARTY

TobyMac is more than just your run-of-the-mill triple threat. On one hand he ranks among the most successful artists in Christian music history in terms of radio success, sales power and critical acclaim. On the other he is universally recognized as a creative force, an artistic maverick and a prophetic voice for racial reconciliation, social justice and a fierce devotion to faith and family. On the third hand, he's the most humble and approachable merchant of cool on the scene today. Yeah; that's three hands. Some things defy common logic.

Obviously, when it comes time for a new TobyMac record to drop there are a lot of people paying attention. His rampant eclecticism and consistent excellence have set the bar very high, and on his third solo outing, *Portable Sounds*, he does not disappoint. An increased commitment to melody and soulful singing abounds, while his now trademarked rock/funk/hip-hop side hits deeper grooves and catchier hooks than ever before. On February 20th, the man *Christianity Today* called "one of the fifty most influential evangelical leaders in America" sets a new standard with the release of *Portable Sounds*.

His solo career took off from the first notes, with two GOLD albums, six Number One singles, two Grammy nominations and widespread critical acclaim. But to hear TobyMac talk about the passion and drive he has for this, his third solo outing, it sounds like all that was just the wind-up, and *Portable Sounds* is the pitch. The artist, producer, songwriter, industry leader and father of five was not the slightest bit interested in going through any motions. "Passion for my art drives me so long as I feel the Most High breathing new songs through me. I committed on this project that when writing and recording I will never rely on what has worked in the past and never fear what hasn't. The canvas is blank and the colors are endless."

As a result, a new lyrical flavor developed on a few of *Portable's* tracks. "I wanted to write a few songs that were simply prayers," he adds. "Over the years I have noticed some consistency in what I appeal to God for, like... 'Help me remember what this is all about...God I don't want to be that jaded man. I don't want to be that hardened artist. I want to remain soft in your hands, so that you can shape me into a vessel that you can breathe through.' I've been in multiple bands and on the road for a while, playing the same venues, visiting the same radio stations, working with the same label. My fight is

to remain fresh, unjaded, where I'm not looking through hollow eyes, but I'm looking at things like they're new again. I expected amazing things while recording this record. I'm not talking about sales or first week numbers or critics. I'm talking about people's lives being touched by this music God is breathing through me. The wonder of it all remains and at any moment I want to be transported into uncharted recording waters not relying on my own understanding. That is why I continue to be passionate. I'm forever counting on what He'll do."

The resulting album is the most dynamically diverse collection of TobyMac songs yet. "Made to Love" opens the set up with its inspirational lyric and irresistible melody and is followed by "Boomin'", a huge rock / funk/hip-hop spectacle in the tradition of his best jams. The diversity continues with generous helpings of edgy funk-rock driven tracks, ("Suddenly," "I'm For You," "Fly,") groovy disco / reggae pop ("One World," "No Ordinary Love,") and richly textured pop "All In," "Face of the Earth," and "Lose My Soul." It will thus come as no surprise to see more mature pop music listeners in the TobyMac club alongside his younger and seemingly inexhaustible die-hard fans as this recording dives to lyrical depths from the guy known to ignite the party.

It's all part of the plan. "I'm always trying to fill in the void," he insists, "especially stylistically. There are certain things I enjoy about doing a record that's diverse; I just enjoy it. I want something that hits hard, and something that grooves. Sometimes it's both of those together and sometimes they are separate. Sometimes I want something that speaks to the whole human race or I may drop something that speaks to the church."

He's just as intentional about the sounds used to convey those sentiments. With musical reference points set on the magical time in urban music when disco was dying and funk was being born, TobyMac, along with his main producer Chris Stevens brought in authentic horn sections and strings to add genuine color to the already funky tracks. "Bands like Parliament, Sly and the Family Stone, The Gap Band, Earth Wind and Fire, The Commodores and Cameo were all in the back of our minds in this production," he reveals.

"I almost called this record *A Soundtrack to Life*," he reveals. "This is a record of thoughts moving through me, and music that best supports and enhances those ideas." His blue eyes gleam when he's in the zone, and with absolutely humility he knows that he is. "This is what it is, and I love it. It's who I am." It's a recording that is heart and soul, street smart and gritty, yet vulnerable and honest. It's the rallying cry and the confession, the strength and the weakness; "Portable Sounds" is real life.