

## Jonathan Butler

A life well lived is often the best foundation for compelling art and there's no denying **Jonathan Butler** has been blessed with a fascinating life. A South African native whose expansive musical gift has earned accolades in the R&B, contemporary jazz and gospel fields, Butler's new release **Grace and Mercy** is filled with the soulful sounds and insightful lyrics fans have come to expect from the veteran performer.

A key word in Butler's life is balance and after years of touring the globe, he's learned just how important time away from the spotlight can be. "These days I try to do a little bit of living in between. I balance my life," he shares. "I've got to spend time living, and through living you come up with stories to talk about and songs to write. These songs are personal experiences. People always assume that because you're a recording artist and you travel the world that you don't have problems and you don't have disappointments in your life, which is not true. We all do. This album truthfully and honestly lets people know that the songs that I'm writing are the things that I'm going through in this season. I'm hoping those songs will effect people in a positive and wonderful way."

On **Grace and Mercy** Butler delivers a collection of songs that serve as a soothing musical balm in today's troubled times. "This album really speaks about optimism, faith, belief and hope, especially in the light of what everybody has been experiencing in the last two or three years," he says. "There's been a lot of people losing their homes, their jobs, enduring the challenges that life brings. I'm hoping this album will bring hope to people. Songs like 'Give it Up To God,' 'I Stand On Your Word,' and 'Who is Like the Lord' were written from experiences that I've had to go through myself."

The lead single, "I Stand On Your Word," is a soaring ballad that reminds us of the power of God's promises. "I love that song," Butler says. "I hope that it hits home to a lot of people."

God's word became real to Butler when he was just a teenager. At 19-years-old, Butler's life forever changed when he became a Christian. "It was love that drew me to Christ," he smiles, "the love of someone who cared enough to talk to me about Jesus and take me in when I was basically a broken young man in South Africa. It was my late brother-in-law, my wife's brother, who led me to Christ. He was that person in my life that actually took the time to talk to me about Jesus, and it didn't take me long to give my heart to Christ because of that."



In the past few years, his faith has sustained Butler during some difficult times. He lost his beloved mother and a very close friend in addition to helping his wife battle cancer. It's been tumultuous time that saw the gifted musician leaning ever closer to God and pouring his experiences into his music. **Grace and Mercy** showcases Butler's gift for taking potent lyrical messages and enveloping them in memorable melodies. "Give it up to God" is a soul-stirring slow jam that spotlights Butler's warm, distinctive voice. "Simplicity always wins for me," Butler says of the song. "There is such power in a simplistic lyric. You really reach people when you say simply, 'Give it up to God.' We all go through those every day trials. We read the Proverbs and Psalms and most of the time we forget

that the Bible says, 'Trust in the Lord with your heart and lean not on your own understanding.' Every day we have to give it up to God, EVERY day."

Among Butler's favorite tracks are "I Know He Cares." "I love, love, love, love 'He Cares!' I wrote 'He Cares' and it spoke to me," Butler says. "I started with the music and then started writing these lyrics down. We all need to know that God really cares for us. The Bible says, "We are the sheep of his pasture" and he absolutely does care for us. That song really speaks to me a lot."

"Moments of Worship" is another highlight on Butler's new project. "I actually recorded 'Moments Of Worship' in Spain years ago," he says. "I was at a friend's house and he had a studio and an engineer. I sat in front of a piano and started singing my favorite worship songs and I just decided to do that on this album. At the end of all the music, it comes back to worship, which I think is beautiful."

Lyrical **Grace and Mercy** delivers the kind of Biblically grounded, emotionally uplifting songs Butler has become known for, yet musically he says fans might be caught slightly off guard. "It's going to surprise people a little bit coming from me because I think it's much more of an edgier gospel record," he says of the project, which was recorded at his home studio. "It's more urban. Overall I feel it's much more of a raw type of record. I didn't grow up in church, but I'm a born again Christian. For the last 30 years I've been saved so I write from that place. I draw a lot from different elements and experiences and also my culture from South Africa, so I think it's a little bit different."

Born in Cape Town, Butler was the youngest of 12 children. He discovered a gift for music early in life and began singing and playing guitar at age seven. As a child, he traveled all over South Africa performing with a troupe of 100 children, getting a first hand look at the country's disturbing dichotomy---devastating poverty and extreme affluence that existed under Apartheid.

Butler signed his first record deal as a teen and became the first black artist played on white South African stations. "That was 1974 and it was a song titled 'Please Stay,'" Butler recalls of the historic tune, which won a Sarie Award, the South African equivalent of a Grammy. "Back then I was with an independent label called CCP Productions."

Though Butler lived in England for 17 years and currently makes his home in Encino, CA, his youth in South Africa continually colors his artistry. "All those memories and all those experiences are what makes a woman or a man a stronger person," he says. "It influences how they live their lives and their appreciation for life and freedom. That's what shapes you and gives you that sensitivity of heart. Anyone who grew up in South Africa, or even in the 60's in America, has a deeper appreciation for life and for freedom. It shapes their lives completely. I feel like all of the stuff that we grew up with in South Africa has made me a better person."

Butler has toured the world with such acclaimed artists as Kirk Whalum, Dave Koz and Ruby Turner. He's earned Grammy nominations and rave reviews in the jazz and R&B fields, but his gospel albums hold a special place in his heart. "It was always a desire that I had," he says of recording gospel music, "but I never really wanted to do it just for the sake of it. I needed to know that God would release me to do it because it's a ministry. It changes people's lives and I wanted to be sure that the Lord would release me to it. I prayed about it for a long time. I waited and then when I got

the confirmation, God began giving me these songs. I wrote 'Falling In Love With Jesus' and that opened the door for me to walk seamlessly into my ministry."

Music, ministry, faith and family are all woven joyfully together for **Jonathan Butler**. His daughter, Jodie, tours with him, sings background vocals on **Grace and Mercy**, and is an integral part of his ministry. "She is actually working on her own project right now," the proud father says. "I'm going to be making time to help develop her record. She's a great writer and she's working on new songs." Butler has a lot to smile about these days. His wife of 30 years survived her battle with cancer, and they enjoy spending time doting on their little granddaughter. "With this record I'm really addressing where the Butler family has been and what we have gone through in 2010 and 2011," he says. "My inspiration is definitely my family. They support me. They love me and they encourage me. I'm very, very excited about this record. I can't wait for people to and connect with it because I believe that God has a lot in store for me and I'm heeding the call and obeying God."