

Black Music Month feature: Yohannes Tona

Written by Harry Colbert Jr.



Just thinking of Yohannes Tona's dizzying schedule is exhausting.

Tona, a native of Ethiopia, is known as the Twin Cities' most sought-after bassist – and with good reason. His outstanding ear for music, combined with his formal training and his love of multiple styles and genres have made Tona one of the busiest (and most likely *the* busiest) musicians in the area. For Tona, slowing down isn't even an option.

"My friends gave me the nickname 'Top Dollar' but I tell them my bank account isn't top dollar," said Tona, while laughing. "I say I'm 'Every Dollar.' I play everywhere – as long as it's good music."

Everywhere is not much of an exaggeration.

Consider the multiple bands Tona is a part of or with whom he's associated. There's Sounds of Blackness, Dr. Mambo's Combo (every Sunday and Monday at Bunker's), #MPLS (formerly BoomBox), gospel and R&B group, the Steeles, the Cuban jazz group, the Nachito Herrera Trio and he was the bassist for the now on hiatus, New Congress. Now add to that the many touring artists with whom Tona has backed. Tona has played with Eric Roberson, Anthony David, Noel Gourdin and countless, countless others. He also plays with Timotha Lanae (featured previously in *Aesthetically Speaking*) and produced or co-produced about half of her album, "RED," which is high on the charts in the United Kingdom and all the rage in Japan.

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