

Calvin Richardson: Tried and true soul music

Written by Alaina L Lewis



A single utterance of the name Calvin Richardson confronts an array of ear-gasms brought on by the memory of a genre in sound that remains tried and true to the heart: Soul Music.

Richardson, who is known world-wide for such hits as “*More Than A Woman*” and “*Sang No More*” is back with his fifth presentation entitled *America’s Most Wanted*, which hit stores August 31st to a unanimous applause.

If the title draws any conclusions, then after a listen you’ll quickly discern why this genius is branding himself as the head of a campaign to bring audible art back to our journey through music.

With his lead single entitled “*You’re So Amazing*,” forging a continued momentum on the album charts he’s openly owning up to the idea that his gifts to the industry deliver more than just music, but rather an experience that will forever reign in the eardrums.

Richardson sat down with Insight News to give us a few liner notes on his career, his songbook, and all the things yet to come for this incredible entertainer.

Insight News: So to start things out, tell Minnesota where you’ve been.

Richardson: I left the industry part of the music game for five years, starting in 2003, and I resurfaced in 2008. This is because I didn’t necessarily like the industry-type standard as far as how the music was approached, marketed and promoted when it comes to real music. I just kind of left it alone, but I kept on making records and kept doing my thing. I came back in 2008, and now I’m getting ready to drop my third album since then. I’m just making up for lost time.

Insight News: I understand what you're saying about leaving the industry. I get that from a lot of artists and know exactly what you mean when you say they're not marketing real music. Why do you think more time is spent promoting these manufactured acts, than promoting artists like you?

Richardson: Those other artists are more easily found and because of that more easily made. I think the world is conditioned to a certain type of sound or music even if it sounds the same. It comes down to the fact that for many it wasn't just about the music, it just became a product in fact. Real music got lost because people weren't paying attention to it; substance, the lyrical content, the melodies- things that really make a song a song.

Insight News: In the industry there's always a lot of trial and error. Is there anything in your past that you wish you could go back and redo, or is there anything you wish you would've done differently that could have changed where you are today?

Richardson: I wish I would've come to the conclusion that I should have been an independent artist a long time ago instead of relying on the big machines (as far as the labels are concerned) to establish my career, my brand, and a place for me in the market. Once I took control of that aspect of my career, things started to turn around for me. Independently, we got a nomination for a Grammy last year, the ASCAP writer of the year award for this year, and I have just been able to cover a whole lot more ground, doing it independently and paying attention to what I need as an artist and getting the product out there. It becomes less about competing or putting something comparable out there because it gives me a chance to just do me.

Insight News: Give us some understanding on what you mean by independent. Do you have your own label now?

Richardson: NuMo Records. I have my own staff that markets the videos, does the press, publicity, and radio promotions- I'm handling every aspect of my career that was left in the hands of the majors before, when they'd leave me to only worry about having to go out and perform. When everything was being left up to the labels, a lot of things just didn't happen because they have their priorities. Their priorities are obviously what makes money for them, and what's bringing a lot of things in. That's where they're going to dump their money, that's where they're going to put the bulk of their energy. Now I can just focus on myself, and doing it like that, too.

Insight News: So with that in mind, what can we expect from your new album America's Most Wanted?

Richardson: A lot of people felt like there would be pressure to follow-up after the album I did with Bobby Womack, but I didn't look at it like there was any pressure. Bobby was doing it long before me, but I was a student of Bobby Womack for years and years perfecting my style and my writing. We went in and basically approached this album the same way I did the Facts of Life: The Soul of Bobby Womack album, with live musicians, live band- everything is live the way that music should be. It's a lot of great music. I focus on the lyrical content, the subject matter and the melodies of the song. I think all of that is important. I have some up-tempo, stepping tracks, slow grooves and ballads- that's what I do. I'm a balladeer. A lot of good music is there.

Insight News: Now what song on this album would you say best represents the mood you were

in when you started creating America's Most Wanted?

Richardson: Probably "America's Most Wanted." It's light, it feels good, and it's happy. I think that speaks volumes about the mindset that I was in when I started creating for the album.

Insight News: Who do you think this album will most appeal to? Do you think the younger crowd will be able to relate to what you're talking about, or do you think this is for the older set, 25 and up?

Richardson: I wouldn't say that it's just for the 25 and up crowd because even the younger people who solely live for life on a day-to-day basis are affected by the same things that affect me.

Insight News: Aside from music, what have you been up to lately?

Richardson: I was in a play for about a year, off and on while I was touring up until about three or four months ago. I did that with Ann Nesby and Lil G from Silk, and Scott Sable. We did the play, toured around with that, and I've pretty much just been working on songs. I'm doing this project for Julius Lewis. He has this movie called Insecure that's getting ready to come out in theaters this October and they want me to write the lead song.

Insight News: Where can we see Insecure?

Richardson: They'll be releasing it nationally. They shot it down in Memphis. It's a good movie, and that's the latest project I'm trying to finish up, aside from the promotional stuff for America's Most Wanted. We just finished the video. It's getting ready to come out.

Insight News: What's the definition of your music? There's an argument out there that believes the word "Neo-Soul" doesn't exist as a style, or whether the term is just New Soul, R&B, or Southern Soul... What name would you say best describes your music?

Richardson: My music is just soul music. I was in the industry when they came up with the Neo-Soul thing, and I think they just did that to come up with a cool title to make soul music cool again. They wanted young people to feel like it was something new, and it's really not. Soul Music, is soul music. It's something you can feel and it takes you on a journey through real situations and real life- that's what I do from the grass roots. I deal with people from that level because I never really left my roots as far as where I come from. I live the way that I try and associate with people, with everything I do in my life. I don't try and live like a celebrity, I don't do any of that. I'm comfortable, but at the same time, I stay grounded and my music is just like that.

Insight News: A lot of artists say that they had to jump the fence to get into the industry. Did you find it hard when you were first breaking into the industry to get help getting signed by a label? Was it hard for you to gain that momentum, and did you have to do some crazy maneuvers to get your album in the right hands?

Richardson: I really didn't have to do all that. What I did was make a good demo and sent it to a producer a couple times. He was living in New York and I was living up there. We got in the studio, wrote a couple songs, and he set up some auditions at the labels. Back in the day you would go to the label and come out in the lobby and they'd bring the staff out and you'd have to perform right there.

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Insight News: That's what they did back in the day?

Richardson: Oh yeah. It wasn't about the demo. The demo would get you in the door, but that was as far as it would get you. You had to sing for the powers that be. They'd bring the A&R department, the marketing department, the radio staff- whomever. There would probably be like 12 people out there watching, and you would have to do what you're going to do, to get yourself that record deal. You gotta sell yourself. It really wasn't that hard because singing is what I do, and I love what I do. It's not necessarily about the money, I do it because I love what I do. My mom always told me 'what comes from the heart, goes to the heart.' If you put it out there, people are going to feel you. I've always had a lot of luck with that.

Insight News: And that is the reason why America loves you. Thank you for your time Mr. Richardson.

Calvin Richardson: No. Thank You for your time.