

Bobby Caldwell: Blue-eyed soul pioneer says he's grateful for his position in R&B

Written by Harry Colbert, Jr.
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Bobby Caldwell fully embraces his place in music and in R&B/soul.

He also embraces the term used to describe his brand of music – "blue-eyed soul." The term refers to white singers who typically sing what's considered R&B or soul music.

"The blue-eyed soul term is flattering to me," said Caldwell, now 62-years-old. "People such as me, Darryl Hall, Michael McDonald, Boz Scaggs, we all got that label. I welcome it. It's more of a privilege. I owe my career to it and that's just fine with me."

The soulful crooner said it was only natural for him to sing what's categorized as R&B/soul music.

"That's the music I grew up listening to," said Caldwell, who grew up in Miami. "Marvin Gaye, Tammi Terrell, The Stylistics, The Spinners, that's what I was listening to. I listened to (Frank) Sinatra and The Beatles, but the backbone of what I was listening to was soul music."

Caldwell, who will perform four shows Jan. 8 and 9 at the Dakota Jazz Club, 1010 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, said he almost gave up on music before his hit, "What You Won't Do for Love" became an instant hit and now an iconic classic.

"I had gone out to L.A. to shop my music and nobody was buying, so I came home with my tail between my legs and I was ready to give up. My father was trying to talk me into land speculating and real estate, but I didn't want anything to do with that," said Caldwell. "Then one day my mom comes to me with a front page article in the *Miami Herald* talking about K.C. and the Sunshine Band (who was signed to Miami-based TK Records). She said why don't you do down there (to TK) and try and get signed. I was so defeated that I didn't want to go, but she insisted, so I went over with a grocery bag full of songs that I had written and two days later I was signed and a year after that I have the number one song in the country."

Proof of the song's greatness – and a reason for its longevity – "What You Won't Do" has been covered or re-recorded in some form by nearly 80 other artists.

"That's kind of remarkable," said the song's writer and original singer, Caldwell. "It's flattering

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that anybody would do your music."

Caldwell said of the many versions of his 1978 recording, his favorites are ones done by Nat King Cole and Peabo Bryson and – maybe somewhat shockingly – one done by 2 Pac. Caldwell's "Open Your Eyes" has been covered or redone by artists such as Common ("The Light"), John Legend and Dwele, making his music relevant to today's fans.

The singer/songwriter released "House of Cards" in 2012 and features Dave Koz on the project. Caldwell also plays bass and guitar on selected tracks.

The upcoming Dakota appearance is Caldwell's first time performing in the city in over a year and a half. His most recent Twin Cities performance – also at the Dakota – brought out a pretty well known fan.

"The owner of the Dakota came to me and said Prince is in the audience," said Caldwell. "Sure enough, he was up there and completely rocking and that was really awesome because I'm a diehard Prince fan."

Tickets for Bobby Caldwell are on sale at the Dakota Jazz Club box office, (612) 332.5299 or online at www.dakotacooks.com . Tickets are \$36 for the 7 p.m. shows and \$30 for the 9 p.m. shows.



Bobby Caldwell at the Dakota

Dakota Jazz Club – 1010 Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis

Jan. 8 and 9

7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

\$36, \$30