

THE CHAMBER GROUP

Jill Scott Biography

She is an artist with an abiding, deep commitment to lyrical honesty and musical integrity. Simply put, if Jill Scott feels it, she writes and sings it. While vivid imagery, metaphor analogy are her stock in trade, there's no pretense, no hiding. She's upfront, in-your-face always real, using her own distinctive poetry to breathe life into words, digging inside to bring forth the accompanying emotion. It is that authenticity that has endeared Jill Scott to everyday music buyers who hear what she's saying through her music and respond according. Folks who know the rough and tumble of life, love right, love wrong, passion misspent, passion fulfilled, lonely nights and empty days and everything in between declare, 'Yeah, girl!', 'Go 'head on!' and 'I feel ya'. And in the tradition of the four albums that precede it, THE REAL THING is another cause for celebration for those who live for the real.

Commenting on her latest, much-awaited Hidden Beach CD – which features production work by Scott Storch (DMX, Snoop Dogg, 50 Cent, Ja Rule), Jill's musical director Adam Blackstone (The Roots), Carvin "Ransum" Haggins & Ivan "Orthodox" Barias (Musiq, Chris Brown, Mario) and JR Hutson among others – Jill says, "I thought the last album (2004's Grammy-winning Beautifully Human, Words & Sounds, Vol. 2) was more peaceful, an affirmation... On the new record, I feel aggressive about what I want, need and desire and you can hear it in my vocal choices, in the tracks. I'd say in a way, it is a sequel to "Beautifully Human" but it's grittier, sassier than the last one. I'm feeling gutsier, I'm feeling much more bold, free. In many ways, it's closer to my first album. My original concept was to show different women – you know, like the housekeeper, the stripper, the congresswoman - but as I started writing and recording, I started taking on all these characters. I put myself in each woman's place...and found that it became more about me, all of it, with the envy, the anger, the frustration, the loneliness, the joy, the passion and the rapture. And that's what makes it juicy..." Juicy, indeed.

The first single, "Hate On Me" one of the fifteen cuts Jill wrote on the album, with its powerhouse production is edgy, intense, exemplifying the kind of work for which Jill is known. "I'm reminded of the biblical scripture, 'No weapon formed against me shall prosper.' I realized that there are people who are gonna be haters. That never affected me until I started noticing it, seeing that there were people...family, friends...who were angry to see me revealing my blessings, wishing they were me. I had to let go of some people in my life because of that. It's been healing for me to say I'm still gonna be me, to say to those people, 'go right ahead, whatever you say won't change my destiny.' We spend too much time 'hating' the hater. If I'm mean to shine and glow, I will. That's what the song is saying..."

Jill – who has her first major starring role in Tyler Perry's fall 2007 "Why Did I Get Married?" movie – agrees that many of the tracks on THE REAL THING have an autobiographical ring. The smooth'n'mellow "Wanna Be Loved" is an example: "I want to be appreciated, liked for who I am, respected. The song reflects that aching yearning I have to be loved and I know that's what all people want..." The midnight love-flavored slow jam "All I" is about "being in a lonely marriage. There has to be a level of passion in a relationship. As a wife, you can become the 'good girl' and your love life can get really repetitive, sex can be very clinical. I'm saying [inside a marriage] I can still be your 'nasty' baby..."

Jill's "Come See Me" evokes lyrical comparisons with Marvin Gaye's classic "Distant Lover" from his "Let's Get It On" LP which – much like THE REAL THING – dealt with topics of fire and desire, joy and pain. The soulful poetess accepts the comparison gladly ("I love the way Marvin was willing to look at his life") noting, "My song is about distance, about being far away from someone who gives you great pleasure. It's almost like a plea. I love the line that says 'I know it's hard over there' because it has more than one meaning! I write stories where some things are clear...and some you don't get until the fifteenth listen!"

Ever provocative, Jill uses "How It Make You Feel" to pose a thoughtful if jarring question: "What if," she asks, "every black female disappeared? That's a question to the world but particularly to black men. I love to talk to my brothers, not at them not to them. Think about it...how would it be if black women vanished tomorrow?" Expressing female bravado is yet another ingredient in this multi-faceted artist's musical palette and two songs come to mind. The rock-oriented title track, like the interlude "Breathe" are what Jill terms "crotch-holding songs! With 'The Real Thing,' I'm like smellin' myself...and 'Breathe' reminds me of the storytellers in rap and hip-hop, LL, Kanye West, Jay-Z, Nas so it's like I'm going to be cocky right now!"

Erotic love, the reality of sex and sensual satisfaction form the basis for a number of cuts and memorable interludes that have been an integral part of Jill's recorded work since her groundbreaking 2000's "Who Is Jill Scott?" Words & Sounds Vol. 1, which earned Jill four Grammy nominations, including a Best New Artist nomination. With its Southern hip-hop feel, "Do It Babe" (featuring Slim) is "a request to keep it up, the keep the intensity you had before, to rock with that." The highly-charged, heavily percussive "Epiphany" is, Jill says, "explicit without being vulgar. The tricky thing about sex is that it's so explosive physically and everything seems right at the time but the moment – and I mean *the* moment – after, you're left with a longing...especially if you want more, like I do!" Equally explicit: "Crown Royal On Ice" which Jill declares is her "favorite piece of writing on the album. In R&B, sometimes people just say things just to be sexual or to be nasty but they're not necessarily poetic. . I wrote this as one consistent stream of consciousness, as one sentence. There are harsh words, soft words, lots and lots of images..."

On the same tip, "Celibacy Blues" – reminiscent of the jazz style of the late, great Billie Holiday (whose "God Bless The Child" was one of the highpoints of 2006's Al Jarreau/George Benson project "Givin' It Up" and a featured cut on "Collaborations," Jill's 2007 collection of tracks on which she's appeared as a guest artist and recorded with others) – was inspired by a year-long self-imposed period of sexual abstinence that Jill experienced. "I had my feelings hurt and I said, 'just let me pull back and focus on myself.' I know a lot of women who did that and they go to God, they become celibate, they want to wipe all that hurt away. But it's hard. I know we are sexual beings but that's not to say you have to act on every urge. Personally, I need that chemical, spiritual connection [from sex] and I prefer it with someone I love. During the time I was celibate, it was blue, a lot of mind over matter where I had to stay away from situations that I could get in that were trouble..." With its cosmic, futuristic sound, "Imagination" is "part of the celibacy thing," Jill explains, "what it would be like, the most lovely love-making I could imagine where we're not controlling ourselves, we're on a wave. It's just 'wow'...you know, I don't want to bite your face off but I appreciate the raw passion..."

And, indeed, passion as expressed through her music has been the essence of what has made Jill Scott one of the most important artists of the new millennium. The North Philly native became part of the international music consciousness with the release of "Who Is Jill Scott?" Words & Sounds Vol. 1, which achieved double-platinum status and earned her NAACP Image Awards, trophies from both Billboard and Soul Train and the honor of sharing the stage with Aretha Franklin for VH1's Divas Live. She graced magazine covers (and was voted among People's 50 Most Beautiful for 2001), contributed editorials and blessed the national television stages of Oprah, David Letterman, Jay Leno and "The View." After

touring the world, she released a real, live album with some new cuts, 2001's "Experience: Jill Scott 826+" which spawned the Grammy-nominated "A Long Walk."

During the ensuing three years, Jill stayed busy, touring consistently, directing a video for Hidden Beach labelmate, trombonist Jeff Bradshaw, appearing on "Sesame Street" in celebration of its 33rd year. Her original compositions were featured on the soundtracks for "Brown Sugar," "Rush Hour 2," "Down to Earth," "Kingdom Come" and the "Red Star Sounds" compilation. Jill made her primetime sitcom debut with a four-episode run on UPN's "Girlfriends," starred in Showtime's "Cave Dwellers" and crafted a book of poetry, entitled simply, "The Minutes, The Moments, The Hours" (St. Martin Press). Reflecting on her accomplishment-filled career, she says, "Honestly, I didn't expect anything when I did my first record. I just hoped and so far I am floored with the things. I've been able to do as a writer and vocalist. I've learned a lot..."

With the 2004 release of "Beautifully Human," Words & Sounds, Vol. 2), Jill experienced a continuation of the acceptance and recognition she enjoyed with her first two albums; the anthemic standout cut "Golden" reflected her life experience, "After taking time off, I felt like I was just living my life like it was golden – it was as if I could polish it, like I could walk past a mirror and just marvel at it. So when I heard the track for the first time, the words just came to me and all I could do was just write them down." The album was nominated for a Grammy for Best R&B Album and won the Best Urban/Alternative Performance Grammy for the single "Cross My Mind."

After another stint on the road, Jill began working on THE REAL THING in 2006, stopping during the process to appear in the Dakota Fanning movie "Hounddog," in which she plays Big Momma Thornton, the artist who originally sang the Elvis Presley hit. "I'm normally on the road for a year and a half at a time and in between recording projects, I like to live so I have something to talk about. I might be gardening, clubbing real hard...and then when I feel the juice, the force telling me it's time to record, I do that. I'm fortunate to be with a record label that understands my creative process. I started at the beginning of 2006 and I declared I was done in June 2007."

THE REAL THING is filled with impactful cuts that will resonate with Jill's loyal existing audience – and beyond. There's "I Don't Know" which Jill describes as a song based on "seeing someone and being blown away by them, not knowing why you connect with them but you do." The real life experience of "being the woman and being the 'other woman,' feeling extreme pain and extreme happiness" is expressed with "My Love." A lament for a man who's 'disappeared' "Insomnia" is a song Jill wrote "when I was around twenty, when I was feeling that kind of desperate, sad longing you feel for someone that you can't get out of your head"; while "Whenever You're Around" is an ode to "the loneliness that can exist inside of a marriage which is the worst kind, when stay in a marriage for the sake of staying there."

Summing it all up, "Let It Be" is "for the critics. I say, whatever it is, let it be that, if it's be-bop, hip-hop, if I stretch my wings and sing country, don't say I'm an R&B singer singing country, say I'm a singer, period. The great artist Salvador Dali one of my favorites and you could watching his life change as you saw his art. That's how I feel about my music. It's an evolution."

While the consistent theme of Jill's latest work centers on relationships, she's says, "I'm not oblivious to the realities of what's going on in the world. I just felt it necessary to delve into some other things with this record and create a connection with people. What makes this record any different? Well, it's me, sexy, harsh, simple...and growing." Indeed, indeed.