

Cultural Daily

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I Am: The Anthem of Antoine Dunn

Carrie Hill · Tuesday, October 22nd, 2013

Beginning his performance career on stage during his middle school years, Antoine Dunn has taken his talent and love for the performing arts to national venues across the nation. Chrysler Hall, Constitution Hall, Paramount Theater, Verizon Theater, State Theater and the Greek Theater are just a few of the national venues that have hosted Antoine's performances. Inspired by his life experiences on tour and the loss of his mother to breast cancer, his sophomore debut single "I Am" reveals the genuine emotion of a heavy heart, carried by an inspirational soundtrack that will move fans across all genres of music, and leave listeners asking for more of Antoine Dunn's new sound. Of his music, Antoine States, "Music isn't what I do, it's who I am."

ARTS & CULTURE MAGAZINE: Growing up, you have said some of your musical influences have been bands like: *The Dramatics*, *The Stylistics*, *The Chi-Lites*, and *The Jackson Five*. How have they had an impact on your musical style?

ANTOINE DUNN: For me, those artists speak from their heart about their life experiences through music. My parents had that music playing in the background of my daily life when I was growing up and I guess they became part of my soul. The songs carry good memories and their layered, genuine sound and lyrics really helped cultivate the groundwork for the kind of artist I wanted to be, not just the kind of songs I wanted to write. Through my parents' example of love in our home and the artists I came to love, I learned that music is a reflection of who you are and your environment. In light of this collective influence, I am passionate about reflecting the goodness of life and about keeping the soul in "Soul" music.

A&C: Your first album "Truth of the Matter" put you on the map with the smash hit "Miss My Love" in addition to a U.S. tour with R&B crooner Anthony Hamilton and ESTELLE. Before your tour you lost your mother Janna Dunn to breast cancer. How did that event shape your life as an artist and an individual?

AD: Oh man, it left scars. Being on a national tour, performing for thousands of people at every venue, was a dream come true for me. But it became such a bitter-sweet experience when I lost my mother, and it's still something that I am pulling out of. I learned at a young age, that music is a universal experience. The power of music to heal and speak to the soul regardless of language, race, country and culture is undeniable. Every song I write is a reflection of an experience directly connected to raw emotions that I know many others have also felt. My new single "I Am" is not only an anthem to the pain of all those across the globe who have lost a loved one, but for all those who must journey to anchor themselves again after the experience. At the end of the day, it's the connection to real people and real life situations that motivates me to let my vulnerability show. The ability to let people share my soul is what has shaped me the most both personally and as an artist.

A&C: Your single “I Am” is very timely as Breast Cancer Awareness Month is coming up in October. There will be many people who will reflect on those they have lost, those that are currently fighting, and many that will celebrate their victory over the battle with cancer. Was writing “I Am” therapeutic for you in healing and what do you hope fans take away from it?

AD: My mother was my anchor and inspiration in pursuing music as a profession. When I was made aware of the little time I had left with her it was literally like time stood still. The world around me continued to live, but internally my world stopped and I just wanted the pain to disappear for me, for my mom and my whole family. The experience really made me take inventory of my life and prioritize what was important. The lyrics “Take me out of time...me out of space...me out of everything that I am” reflects feeling out of control, the pain of realizing that we can’t always fix what’s broken, and wishing we could escape the moment. I think that feeling of being in a moment that you wish didn’t have to hurt while living through it, is a life-changing experience and a universal emotion. That message is what I hope listeners take away from the song.

A&C: Can you tell us about the benefit concert for breast cancer awareness you hosted on August 23rd in Cleveland?

AD: My mom supported a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization in my hometown of Cleveland called the Minority Women With Breast Cancer United. They were a big supporter of her throughout her battle too and after I completed “I Am” I felt inspired to use it as a catalyst for breast cancer awareness. Because it’s not just one person that is affected by breast cancer, it is an entire small community of family and friends. I wanted to honor that collective experience. So I put together this benefit concert called “Antoine Dunn The Experience Concert” which was held at Cleveland State University’s Waetjen Auditorium. It was an evening of musical entertainment meant to honor those we have lost and celebrate those who have been victorious over breast cancer. I was able to present the Janna Dunn Breast Cancer Awareness Community Leadership Award to the Director to thank her for the work she has done in the community serving women in need. This is something I would like to do annually in Cleveland and eventually I would like to take it on the road nationally for breast cancer organizations in the future.

A&C: Where can we buy the single “I Am”?

AD: You can buy it on iTunes.

Liked what you read? You can connect with Antoine on any of his social media links to find out the latest news about his music, his concert and upcoming events.

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