



Angie Stone

UNEXPECTED

Released on Stax

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CONCORD RECORDS



In 2007, during a five night stint at London's Jazz Café, The Evening Standard reminded us that soul luminary **Angie Stone** was "still the one worthy of being feted as Aretha Franklin's heiress". Stone had recently signed to the legendary soul music label Stax; found a fresh start, and released the highly acclaimed *The Art Of Love and War*, rejuvenating classic R&B with her incomparable soul-baring intensity.

Unexpected represents a giant step forward for Stone. "I wanted this album to be something different," she says, "I didn't want to make the kind of neo-soul record I had made in the past. That would have been repetitive." Though she has never shied away from pushing the limits of her music, this recording is a stretch beyond whatever limits – real or perceived – she might have been facing when the project began.

The title, **Unexpected** suggests of surprises waiting within the album, yet comes with a double meaning. Without question, it's a diverse mix of styles and colours, almost always upbeat and forward thinking. The unwavering sense of determination at its core though, was actually forged by a heartbreaking turn of events.

In the midst of recording, Stone encountered a shock that even she didn't see coming. Her father – her spiritual anchor and creative mentor – passed away very suddenly. "It was totally unexpected," she says, "and that's where I came up with the title. I really didn't think I could finish the project... I had to lean on my dad's wisdom and energy, and try to be open to what he would have wanted me to do in order to finish the songs. I can say that his spirit was literally there in the studio with me, and I'm grateful for that."

Unexpected encompasses a diversity of styles and influences that Stone has distilled over the years – rap, R&B, soul, funk and more – and weaves them together in a narrative that addresses life's ups and downs, but ultimately strikes a redemptive chord.

From the get-go, the quick and funky title track – with its backbeat inspired by Sly Stone's 1971 hit, "Family Affair" – warns the listener to "Prepare yourself for just about anything." Equally energetic is *I Ain't Hearin' U* a song that decries rumour and gossip. The track is co-written by vocalist and songwriter **Juanita Wynn**, Stone's collaborative partner for several years.



I Don't Care is a proclamation of self-acceptance and self-assurance, based on sound advice that Stone received early on: “My dad always used to tell me, ‘Don’t worry about what people say. They can’t change anything. Whatever God wants for you is most important.”

“Tell Me” is built on a churning techno groove that never lets up. The vocal combination of Stone and Wynn – artfully co-produced by **Kerrim “Ikon” King** and **Fitzroy “Art Teacher” Reid** – creates a wall of sound that’s augmented by an edgy delivery from unsigned Atlanta rapper **Dose**

Think Sometimes is a poignant ballad inspired in large part by Stone’s late father. “It’s funny how people can slip away so fast, and suddenly they’re in your past,” she says. “You wonder about what you could have – or should have – done differently. It’ll make you think sometimes.”

Unexpected represents a turning point for **Angie Stone** – not just in her career, but in her life and her world view. And while the losses that triggered the transformation may be painful, the artist and her work are stronger because of them. “This album is something that no one would have anticipated coming from me. My father always encouraged me and everyone else he knew to reach out and make a leap of faith, and that’s exactly what I’ve done.”

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