

Sentury Is Back With Forever Video

Houston's Century follow up their popular cover of Jeffrey Osborne's "Only Human" with the single "Forever." The quartet has dropped the video for the song that is destined to become a new backdrop for courting and weddings. CJ, AJ, Rico, and Leo are welcomed proof that the R&B group is not dead. The video is part musical performance and the other half is a look at the progression of a happy romance. The guys express the meaning of "Forever" in passionate harmonies and production that could easily make you mistake them for a '90s band. Their sound is a throwback to the future and "Forever" is already showing cross-generational appeal with online R&B crate diggers.

Eric Benét & India.Arie Declare It Must Be Love

Eric Benét's video for "Must Be Love" with India.Arie feels like a close affair even though they were obviously apart when they filmed it. The strength of the song can't be hindered by a pandemic-styled video. "It Must Be Love" is on Benét's ninth album, *The Co-Star*. The album of collaborations with all women came out during the summer. The project is a full-length version of his *Duets* EP released last year.

R.I.P. D'Angelo



D'Angelo has passed at age 51 after a private struggle with pancreatic cancer. He rose in the '90s as one of the key artists of the Neo-soul movement, which marked a paradigm shift in R&B. A Pentecostal church upbringing and serious study of Prince and foundational Black music gave him the stock to become a futuristic funk sorcerer. *Brown Sugar*, *Voodoo*, and *The Black Messiah* mastered tradition and then personalized it with nuance and a vision that, unlike his predecessors, included hip-hop. D'Angelo became a major link between 20th- and 21st-century soul music. The hit records and adulation from the music industry complicated things for him after the reaction to his naked physique in the "Untitled (How Does It Feel)" video. He eventually worked through those feelings and returned to the mission of making pure music free from commercial obsessions. Those albums became a guiding light for successive generations of artists, including contemporary names like Kendrick Lamar and Doja Cat.

Of course, soul fans like me are trying to understand why he passed only seven months after his former personal and professional partner, Angie Stone. The trajectory of her career as a hip-hop pioneer was one of the things that linked their approach to his music and hers. Whether he was working as a member of The Soulquarians, collaborating with Lauryn Hill on their classic “Nothing Even Matters,” or touring with The Vanguard, he changed the way they approached their artistry. We last saw him earlier this year in his friend and colleague Questlove’s Sly Stone documentary. Coincidentally, Sly was the other Stone to pass this year, leaving only a few funk lords left on earth. At the time of D’Angelo’s passing, he was working with Raphael Saadiq on his fourth album.

Throwback: Howard Hewett: I’m For Real



Howard Hewett left the group Shalamar in 1985 to start a solo career and in 1986 his debut album, *I Commit To Love*, was released on the Elektra label. Leon Sylvers III had shaped Shalamar's dance-oriented sound as the house producer of Dick Griffey's SOLAR Records. Griffey and Soul Train founder Don Cornelius put the group together and the trio released a collection of mainstream and club hits. Hewett's solo voice went straight into a hardcore R&B love man sound. The songs on *I Commit To Love* were slower and moved at the pace of a patient courtship. Jazz bassist, songwriter, and producer Stanley Clarke co-wrote and produced "I'm For Real" with Hewett. Clarke's versatility as a jazz player had already been tested in his musical partnership with George Duke, which produced the pop and R&B hit "Sweet Baby" five years earlier. "I'm For Real" soothed with a warm saxophone and Hewett's impassioned promises. Hewett's work with Clarke on "I'm For Real" helped him grow as a balladeer and they made an R&B top ten hit. In 2025, new generations are discovering and reacting

to Hewett's "I'm For Real." He released the single "To Thee I Pray" in 2021.