

R.I.P. Isaac Hayes

Kickmag Interview With Joe



The fight to be a longstanding R&B singer is the battle of every singer who survives the one-hit wonder status whether they linger on urban music charts or make the Billboard 100.

Joe's emergence in the early '90's came at the end of New Jack Swing's renaming into hip-hop soul, the beginning of so-called neo-soul and Luther's focused forage into pop.

A gospel music background, and the hip-hop and R&B sensibilities of a generation X, shaped his tenor into standard soul infrequently poised towards pop for the secular world. By '97 his second album established his first mass sing alongs with "All The Things (Your Man Won't Do)" followed by the Big Pun "Still Not A Player" collaboration on the rapper's debut album in '98. His uncomplicated sincerity, easy vocals, and the benefit of first-rate songwriters has produced multiple love anthems that have melded his work into that of a traditional torch-bearer for R&B. Prepping for his new album Joe Thomas: New Man, the Georgia native wants fans to know the person he's become since last year's Ain't Nothing Like Me. Jive Records is in the past and Kedar Entertainment is his new recording home. In this interview he shares his experience of performing in Africa for a first time, the professional betrayal of former labelmate R.Kelly who wrote and produced for his '03 album And Then and the reasons behind New Man.

You have Joe Thomas: New Man coming out in September why the

first-time usage of your last name?

I want people to really get to know who Joe is because a lot of people are always asking Joe who? in conversations so now is the appropriate time to put it out there and part of that reason too is when you talk about music I want it to have a ring to it so people really know who Joe is.

You said in another interview that you can't sing about what you don't live, how is "New Man" a statement about you?

New Man represents me for the past 6 months now I've been off a major label and I'm doing it all independent now my manager and I got a label together we got Universal for distribution so for me you get to see Joe as an artist and I play both sides of the game. It's really confident to know that now I can have a real situation for myself now. I spent 15 yrs in the industry on a major label and I've learned a lot over the years and independent is one of the best things you can do. I just turned 36 last month you know you grow-up a little bit you start challenging yourself to do other things. It's not that I got a bad relationship with Jive I actually won a lawsuit against them and I started to do other things I think it's the best move I ever made. A lot of things that went on at Jive that I didn't know but I know now that I'm off the label held me back other artists such as R.Kelly who would do certain things as far as calling the radio station and try to put my record on hold singles that I put out. So now I'm the main focus and the top guy there's no room for that. So I'm really excited about the move it's a better move Jive set-up me up good we made a lot of money over there together so it's important now that I set it up for myself.

What does the music sound like? I have only heard "ER?"

We're making sure the songs are actual good songs I focus mostly on making sure I got a great song first and musically you know all of that falls into pocket with today's R&B. But

it's different you have some features so like Busta Rhymes I have Trey Songz and Mario that I did a song with as well so it's some different things happening a little different from the last album.

Of all the producers you have and have not worked with do you have any favorites?

You know I love working with [Bryan-Michael Cox](#) he's sort of like the Teddy Riley of today's producers. He comes with as much original as far as he don't like to use samples he rarely ever uses them so he comes with original things he's creative musically and he's actually a great musician as well and another thing he's so easy to work with that makes it really good for a creative person like myself to just come in and do my thing. There's a lot of good producers out there like Timbaland and Dr. Dre I give those guys a lot of credit as well cause you got cats behind the scenes doing things like D.Miles another producer on my album who is probably one of the next best producers up and coming.

What makes a good song?

The lyrics it's very important that the words are very strong that they mean something have substance and the next best thing to a good song is the melody. Great melody great lyrics is really the key to making a great song.

Who are your favorite songwriters?

I love the old great songwriters Marvin Gaye was a great writer as well. Michael Jackson was even a great writer Smokey Robinson some of the best. Stevie Wonder now today you have artists like Ne Yo and Trey Songz who write their own material which is good to know because they represent that really young generation and to see them carry the torch and music actually coming from them it feels real good.

Any other singles or videos?

We're releasing two singles one is a ballad and one is a mix of reggae record and the ballad is called "ER" and actually that's out it was number one and most added last week. The other single is called "Why Just Be Friends" which we shot a video to.

When will the video be out?

The video should be out in a couple of weeks. We are going into 106 and Park gonna present the video and what not so everything is moving really really fast everything is right around the corner and we got a great team of people. There are a lot of people working on this project and focused on the success of it.

Are you working on any other special projects or promotional stuff?

I also have another album coming out February 10th it's called Joe Signature on which I wrote and produced every song and actually play the majority of the instruments on the album. And so that's just in time for Valentines Day called Joe Signature. Plus you hear from your fans out there and they say when is the next record coming and they ask within 6 to 8 months now a lot of people look forward to the next new thing a lot quicker now I have the opportunity to deliver that I never could do this at Jive records. Being independent you can make your own choices make your own decisions. Well you know I'm back in the studio again after I just finish these two albums which is done in about 3 months then again I just may drop a Christmas album before the year is over plus I'm starting some other businesses opening some franchises. I'm also getting ready to get into the movie field.

Do you want to act or work behind the scenes?

You know a little bit of both a little writing and producing I want to take the challenge of acting as well. I love movies

I'm inspired by a lot of the actors that's out right now like Don Cheadle so many great actors that are really really talented.

Do you have any favorite contemporary singers?

I like Mario, Mario's a really good singer and I really think he has thing on the post when it comes to feeling his music when he performs. He's one of the guys who really takes singing very serious. You have as a writer you have Ne Yo that's out there that's really good you I admire those kind of guys who take on this seriously this is not a game and do something that's going to be effective. And then you also have Alicia Keys who on the other is multi-talented so many great artists in today's R&B that's really good.

What do you like to do when you are not doing music?

I love sports I love basketball and you know I go play hoop when I get an opportunity. And I love bowling I love playing cards as well blackjack or poker. I'm not the club type you know usually when I go to the club it's more work than anything. I love going to dinner love movies and just hanging out that's my time my leisure.

Out of all the songs in your career so far which one do you know you will have to sing forever?

Aw wow that's probably "I Wanna Know" it doesn't matter where I am I have to sing that record I mean even though they scream a lot for "All The Things Your Man Won't Do" a lot but ultimately I think "I Wanna Know" is the most requested record.

Are you touring the new record?

I'm actually going on tour I got a big tour set-up over in Europe we're doing London and Paris, Amsterdam we're going to

Germany then from there I go straight to Japan which I'm just getting back from Japan a couple of days ago doing promo work for about 7 days. Now I'm going to be there for about 3 weeks and I got about 26 or 27 shows to do in about 2 weeks it's a lot of work over in Japan I have to do. They really love R&B music I really built a career for myself over there as well making the music that I make here in America. They totally get the music and they totally understand it.

Of all your overseas tours where's the most interesting place you have gone with your music?

When you go to places like Africa you don't really get those opportunities to go there and they haven't seen you since you've been out. I'm just now getting to Zimbabwe which was last year and it was just absolutely phenomenal I felt like I was a king or something coming into the city the way they treat you so it's a little different than being here at home because you know we hang out at clubs or we did hang out at clubs in the past and people get to see you at any time on the plane at the airport. So when you love an artist or appreciate an artist's music and career for so long and you never got to see them and now finally after so many years you get to see them it's like pandemonium and it was a beautiful feeling just to be appreciated so well over there and all those countries are pretty much the same way.

**Throwback: Joe- I Wanna Know
(Live)**

R.I.P. Bernie Mac