

From The Heart of a Speechless Singer

By Andrea R. Williams



"I'm so in awe of you; Lord, you leave me speechless". Those lyrics are from one of today's most popular hits, "Speechless". Sung by a soulful worshipper, GRAMMY Nominee and EMI Gospel Recording Artist Anita Wilson is a new voice in gospel music. A protégé of gospel pioneer Donald Lawrence, the GRAMMY and Stellar Award Nominee is forging her own niche in the sacred genre. Flaunting the rich musical heritage known as the Chicago sound, she is delivering a new style in today's gospel music---Worship Soul. Blessed with a strong alto voice and the ability to pull the listener into to her worship, Anita Wilson knows how to easily wrap her smoldering vocals around any song she chooses. A worship leader and featured vocalist in the award-winning ensemble Donald Lawrence & Company, she boldly takes the solo stage with a brand new and dynamic release, *Worship Soul*.

A pastor's daughter, Anita has been singing all of her life. Shortly after moving to Chicago from East St. Louis in 1999, Wilson met up with VaShawn Mitchell. She got her feet wet in the industry working with him writing on his "Believe In Your Dreams" project in 2004. Mitchell asked Wilson to sing on his "Lost In His Presence" track. Little did Anita know, Donald Lawrence was at the live recording that evening. The gospel great loved what he heard and as fate would have it, he was looking for singers for his group, Company. Anita joined the ensemble and subsequently worked him on the *I Speak Life* CD and the *Tri-City Singers Finale* project. She also sang "Happy Being Me" on *The Law of Confession* CD and on "Second Wind", on the latest CD, *YRM (Your Righteous Mind)*. As a vocalist for the Company, she's sung background for such artists as Hezekiah Walker, Marvin Sapp, Joann Rosario, Vanessa Bell Armstrong and many others.

"Donald is an amazing artist," says Wilson. "He's my mentor. I have learned so much from him. I observed him in the studio and listened to what he said to the engineers and the singers. I was a sponge. Little did I know I would need those lessons when I did my solo project," Anita shares.

Transitioning from background singer to lead vocalist has been an interesting shift for the artist. "It's easier when you're walking out on stage as a background singer as opposed to the 'main attraction'. It can be a little nerve-racking. It's so different to hear people say, 'We're going to hear Anita Wilson tomorrow night'. It's something I am getting used to," she says. "There's also a humble confidence that takes over when you know God has gifted you and empowered you to do a thing."

Worship Soul is a stunning collection of music. The lead single, "Speechless" has been catching the ear of radio listeners for weeks now. Already hitting the Top 10 on the Billboard charts, the emotive ballad, penned by acclaimed songwriter and producer Rick Robinson, is an unforgettable, passionate love song to God. Slipping in a few bars of "If I Can't Say A Word" by Lawrence, the track leaves the listener wanting more. "Speechless" is also featured on *WOW Gospel 2012*: a collection of 30 of 2011's most popular songs.

In addition to “Speechless”, *Worship Soul* showcases the gifted songwriter in a number of powerful cuts including a contemporary rendition of Rev. James’ Cleveland’s “Jesus Will” and the beautiful and captivating “Perfect Love Song”. Fans of the artist have been enjoying the intro “Have Your Way” as well as the soulful sounds of “More of You”. Pulling from her R&B, soul and jazz influences, Anita takes the listener on a musical journey with each song, telling her own story. A true praiser, Anita taps into the heart of God with tracks like the declarative “It’s Done” and an inspirational rendition of James Taylor’s “Shower The People”. Anita co-produced the album with Robinson and the CD was recorded live in Chicago at Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church. The Southside church, founded by Rev. Clay Evans and currently under the pastorate of chart-topping Pastor Charles Jenkins of “Awesome” fame, is also the ministry where Anita is a member.

Nominated for a 2013 GRAMMY Award for Best Gospel Album and three 2013 Stellar Awards, Anita is thrilled about the new project and knows that she’s offering something distinctive to the gospel listener. “I have a laid-back style and *Worship Soul* is in its own unique space. I’m glad that it’s not so soulful that people can’t feel God in it. There are a number of different influences there, but the heart of the project is worship – with a soul edge to it”. From the first song to the last, Anita Wilson's debut collection is refreshing and authentic. Fusing the heart of worship with a passion for soul music, “Anita Wilson” is a name to remember.