

Marvin Sapp

“Thirsty”



The words “parched”, “dehydrated” and “dry” conjure up thoughts of a desert, a place lacking water. But “thirsty” means something entirely different to Marvin Sapp. It’s a word that reflects a renewed desire for the living water from the lover of his soul, Jesus Christ. Thirsty is the new project from the GRAMMY, Dove and Stellar Award nominated artist Marvin Sapp. His seventh solo project, Thirsty, encompasses what fans have loved about the artist since his days as lead singer with Commissioned – unmatched vocal delivery, and spirited, inspiring performances.

Known as one of gospel music’s most recognizable voices, Marvin Sapp, Pastor of Lighthouse Full Life Center Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, returns to a live setting on the new project. Calling upon well-known producer Aaron Lindsey for the recording, Sapp says, “I love recording live.

I like to feed off the energy of the people. In the studio, you’ve really got to create something. With a live recording, I get a chance to feel what they feel, draw off their emotions and see their tears. It really helps to direct me in ministering to them.” Recorded live at the Resurrection Life Church, Grandville, MI, Sapp got the chance to spread his musical wings during the 12-track set.

“The night of the live recording was unbelievable,” says Sapp. “It was a mind-blowing, life-changing experience. I really had the opportunity to minister songs that ministered to me,” recalls Sapp. Although the evening was filled with amazing new music, for the pastor, the night was bittersweet. “A lot of people don’t know, but during that period, within a 90-day span, I lost my father, Henry Sapp, II, my musical mentor, L. Craig Tyson, who co-founded Tyscot Records and my spiritual father, Bishop William C. Abney – who passed the day before my live recording,” recalls Sapp.

It was out of his pain and grief over his father’s death that the lead single, “Never Would Have Made It” was born. A song that many find relevant, “Never Would Have Made It” was written the Sunday after Dr. Sapp buried his father. He says, “We had already eulogized him. I had to throw the blanket in with him and close the casket. I had to stand up and say ‘earth to earth, ashes to ashes’. I had to preach the message and drop him off at the cemetery to be buried. But the Sunday after that, I went into the church; and it seemed that everybody was functioning normally. And I was standing there thinking, ‘What’s going on?’ Don’t these people see that I’m in pain?”, he says. It was at that moment he decided he wasn’t going to preach the Sunday morning message.

Then he says he heard the voice of God. “The Lord said to me, ‘Marvin, there’s something you need to understand. Although your father isn’t with you physically, I will never leave you nor will I forsake you. I will be with you always even until the end of the earth’. Then I walked into the pulpit with my Bible. When God began to assure me that He was there for me, I stood up. I grabbed the microphone and started singing, ‘Never Would Have Made It,’” says Sapp. The song happened prophetically, right on the spot and is destined to be one of the album’s favorites.

Thirsty is a representation of a new perspective for Sapp. Through the losses, he's understood life better. A new pastor – his church is in its fourth year – Sapp experienced much opposition when he followed the call to lead. He became “a prophet with no honor in his hometown” of Grand Rapids and tried to gain the acceptance of the people to win them over. It was at that point that God helped him to realize that he was “thirsting” for the wrong things, the applause of the people. God instructed Sapp to “thirst for me” and He would turn the hearts of the people to him. Eventually, that happened and gave the singer even more to sing about. Written by songwriter Jason Nelson, the track is a sweet one with soprano backing vocals which bring spiritual refreshment for the parched soul. The song finds the listener seeking an unquenchable desire for God.



Sapp truly excels when it comes to worship tunes and the title cut is no exception. “A Place Of Worship”, another Nelson creation, opens with the strumming of an acoustic guitar while beckoning each of us to find that special place with God. He also revisits “In The Garden”, the classic church hymn, but gives it a familiar Marvin Sapp vocal twist.

“Worshipper In Me”, a song that perfectly embodies the life of the artist, is a stand-out. Containing a smooth and sultry feel, the musical endeavor includes strong strains of traditional jazz. With soft strokes of piano keys highlighting this pretty ballad, one can hear the clarity of Sapp’s incomparable vocals on this cut, an ideal tune for intimate times of worship. The song was penned by Johnathan Dunn, songwriter for a number of other Sapp songs, including another lively, up-tempo track, “Rivers Flow”, also part of Thirsty.

Sapp is best known for his songs of encouragement and Thirsty certainly has no shortage of them. “Praise Him In Advance”, with a commanding spoken exhortation, speaks to the “conditional praiser”. Not only does he encourage the believer to step out and praise God before the victory, but through the lyrics of the song, he explains the importance of praise and what it does to the enemy. Unconditional praise is the message in this moving cut. Sapp says, “Instead of reacting to our circumstances, we need to respond to them. The way we respond to them is that we stand firm and praise God even though we know that what we’re dealing with isn’t something that makes us feel good. But we realize that everything that happens in our life happens for the good.”

Another uplifting tune is “Possess The Land”. With melodies placed over a laid-back, funk-filled beat, this song calls for listeners to “stand in authority, walk in your victory”. It’s one that will give strength to the timid Christian and find them claiming everything God promised. “Power”, a reminder of God’s power – specifically the “Holy Ghost” power – is perfect for the church praise team. With an exciting and dynamic rhythm section and a flavoring of urban-tinged, contemporary gospel, this one is a winner.

Praisers will enjoy the bubbly, bouncy “Magnify”. The tune is true “church” and speaks of “magnifying God” and making Him larger than our problems. “Shout Unto God” brings to mind a psalm from the pen of David. This mellow track, peppered with elements of contemporary Christian music, will hearten lovers of God to bless Him with their voices. Starting off with relaxed feel, the cut builds to a frenzied climax of praise. Throughout the twelve tracks of Thirsty, Sapp shows that his five-year absence from recording – and the fire of adversity – have given him even more experiences to minister from.



During his recording hiatus, Sapp has been “focusing on the church and building up the membership”. The Lighthouse Full Life Center Church began with 24 members and now –between its two church sites – has grown to 1500 members in just four years. Although he’s thrilled with the physical growth of the church, he’s more concerned with the building up of his members, as individuals. “We deal with the mind, the body and the spirit. We teach people to elevate their thoughts and to change their outlook on life. We encourage people to empower, not enable. We want to be a church that’s a 21st century in its application. Not just being a place that grandma used to say was ‘a wheel in the middle of a wheel’, but being a church that’s relevant to 21st century believers,” explains Sapp. With a heart close to home, he also says, “I’ve been focused on being a good father and a good husband. My wife and I have been married for 15 years now.” With almost 200 preaching and singing engagements per year, Sapp has hardly been resting on his laurels.

Sapp sees Thirsty as an extension of his church ministry. “I’ve always wanted to encourage the believer. All of my music, all of the songs I sing are trying to get the believer to understand that the greater one on the inside of them is far greater than any circumstance that goes on around them,” says Sapp. “My focus has always been to do music that uplifts the believer, that encourages the believer, that strengthens the believer. It’s the same goal I have at my church. If people leave empowered and not enabled, then I know I’ve not only mastered the pulpit, but the pulpit of music as well.”