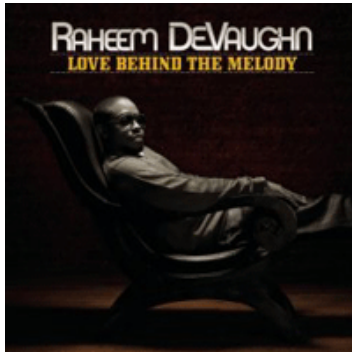




## Love is the Melody!

GSS Review



Jive Records recently released Raheem DeVaughn's sophomore album, *Love Behind The Melody* on January 15th. Raheem's first project, *The Love Experience* along with several mix tapes has led to a tremendous underground following. His constant touring with impressive performances also built anticipation for his second album. Raheem has recently proclaimed himself the "R&B Hippy Neo-Soul Rock Star" and if you're already familiar with his first cd, and any of his mix tapes, this is a very accurate portrayal. With *Love Behind The Melody* Raheem's displays more of his r&b side but its still not the same as what is considered today's r&b. Throughout the collection of songs Raheem's heartfelt lyrics and vocals invoke r&b/soul legends of the past. The release of his first single, *Woman* and the Grammy nod (Best Male R&B Vocal Performance) before the album's release built expectations that are met with pleasing results.

While other r&b artists have resorted to the explicit and often raunchy depictions of love and sex Raheem restores women's faith with refreshing and positive lyrics. In short, he courts women and makes them feel special and appreciated again in the likes of Marvin Gaye and Donny Hathaway. And with the recent influx of much younger r&b singers who unsuccessfully attempt to convince grown women that they appreciate and understand relationships, Raheem's sincerity is a welcomed break from the trend.

Raheem wrote and arranged all the songs on the album and Kenny "Dope" Gonzalez handled much of the production but there's also collaborations with producers such as Scott Storch, Chucky Thompson, Kwame, Jack Splash and Bryan-Michael Cox that give the album a more r&b/hip hop feel to it. It also features a few guest appearances with the inclusion of Big Boi and Marhsa Ambrosius from Floetry.

The current single, *Woman* pays homage to all women depicting Raheem's love, respect and admiration. This up-tempo track, produced by Chucky Thompson is laced with a catchy chorus over Raheem's smooth vocals and backgrounds make for the perfect blend and justification of the recent Grammy nomination. Much like Angie Stone's tribute to brother's, Raheem's new love anthem to women is courageous and so sincere that its sure to become a classic considering the current state of r&b, which often lacks substance and positive descriptions of women. *Love Drug* and *Energy* produced by Scott Storch gives it a contemporary feel. On *Love Drug* Raheem proclaims that it's a two way street to be addicted to his lady and vice versa. "You got me hooked. I got you sprung." Clever metaphors for the effects of love are prevalent throughout the song without some of the common clichés sounding trite. *Energy* illustrates the pleasure one feels once you find

someone that you have good chemistry with and how two people can be drawn together. Big Boi's verse adds a nice touch to this already seamless track.

Hip-hop flavored, *Friday (Shut The Club Down)* includes an interesting sample of the Temptations, *My Girl* produced by Kwame. This track stands out because it is a detour from the love theme giving Raheem a more contemporary sound and revealing his fun and playful side. *Customer* is definitely one of the more radio friendly tracks. The lyrics are very cunning offering a depiction of catering to a woman's every request. "I'm the catch of the day. Your dessert, your meal your drink. You can find it all in me. I'll fill you up for free. If your heart is hungry. You can place your order here with me. Let me server you up. You can have it your way. You're the customer." This is sure to be a favorite for the ladies.

*Mo Better* brings Raheem's soulful side to the forefront and all the memories of great soulful ballads. Everything about his lady makes it better for him. Blending his falsetto with his smooth vocals and backgrounds create a beautiful melody. *Woman I Desire* gives listeners a taste of spoken word but stays connected to the love theme, "Thanks for not snapping when our rapping didn't reflect your worth." *Desire* and *Midnight* produced by Kenny Dope Gonzalez are mellow grooves that continue to sooth. *Marathon* adds a great collaboration featuring Marsha Ambrosius from Floetry. It is a well-crafted and sensual song also produced by Kenny Dope Gonzalez. Other notable tracks are *She's Not You* and *Try Again*. The last song, *Four Letter Word* is a nice conclusion to this compilation again offering feel good lyrics and love for being in love.

There is certainly a lot of love behind all the melodies on Raheem's compilation. Leela James once asked, "Where did all the soul go? We don't sang no more." Raheem's project couldn't have come at a better time to give music a much-needed dose of love and soul. If you're tired of the shallowness that today's r&b artists have offered then you won't want to miss a chance to experience it in the year's best effort thus far and in more recent times. Raheem is well known for great live performances so if the opportunity presents itself seeing him live will be an impressive and memorable event. He is currently opening up for Jill Scott during her Real Thing Tour beginning in February. Love Behind The Melody is in stores now. For more info [www.myspace.com/devaughnenterprises](http://www.myspace.com/devaughnenterprises)