

MAYER SPEAKS ...

Written by Bill Buckley
Tuesday, 14 July 2009 14:12



MAYER HAWTHORNE'S debut album - 'A Strange Arrangement' - is taking the UK soul world by storm. Since www.soulandjazzandfunk.com was the first UK-based media to feature MAYER, it was logical that the enigmatic Detroit-based artist wanted to speak with us before anyone else... we obviously wanted to know how he concocted that delicious mix of retro flavours and contemporary nuances - but first what about his musical background?

I grew up just outside of Detroit, Michigan. I've been DJ-ing, collecting records and playing in bands most of my life, but until recently I was primarily focused on hip-hop. This whole Mayer Hawthorne thing started off as sort of a joke. I wrote and recorded a few soul tunes just for fun. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever expect that it would lead me to this point.

Since you grew up near Detroit - I'm presuming (a bit obvious from the music) that Motown was a huge influence....

Absolutely - the Motown sound is a very big part of Detroit. I'm extremely fortunate to have grown up there. No other city in the world has more soul.

Was it strange for a white kid to be into Motown?

Strange is a good word. I think what most people find strange is that I'm a white kid who is creating new, Motown-inspired music.

What about your other musical influences?

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I listen to Slum Village, Steel Pulse, Prince, Smashing Pumpkins, The Beatles, The Beach Boys, Helmet, Coldplay, Stereolab, Smokey Robinson, The Police, Public Enemy, and many, many, many more.

Now let's talk about the album -

Yep - my debut album 'A Strange Arrangement' will be released this fall on Stones Throw Records. I wrote, produced, arranged, recorded and sang nearly everything on the album, and played the majority of the instruments.

What exactly was the sound you were trying to create 'cos there's a lot going on in there - Motown, Curtom ... harmonies like the Esquires - even the Beach Boys?

I honestly didn't really think that much about it. I tried to just create some good soul music, rather than try to reproduce any certain style. You'll probably hear a little bit of everything that's influenced me.

What's your favourite track... and why?

I like all the tracks for different reasons - but I'm probably most proud of the title track 'A Strange Arrangement'. It's the most complex song that I've written, both lyrically and musically.

What are your hopes for the album?

Hopefully people will listen to it with an open mind. Maybe it will help someone cope with a difficult break-up? Hopefully people will dance to it, cry to it, make love to it, sing along with it... Mainly, I hope it will be successful enough that I can keep making more.

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And what about your future plans - long and short term?

I'll be touring the US and Europe this fall to support the album. I'm also working on a lot of new projects. I'm always looking to the future, working on new music, and trying to stay creative. Follow me at twitter.com/mayerhawthorne .

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MAYER HAWTHORNE'S 'A Strange Arrangement' album is released in September ... full review on www.soulandjazzandfunk.com soon...