

Notes & Quotes

Dione Taylor



Truth, spirituality, and discovery. Three words that singer, songwriter, and musician Dione Taylor use when describing herself and her latest offering *Born Free*. In this edition of Notes & Quotes, Dione Taylor discusses her new album *Born Free*, the journey that brought her to making it, what makes her tick as an artist, and what lies ahead with respect to her musical endeavours.

Taylor has a history deeply rooted in music. Growing up in Saskatchewan, she is the first to

say that she comes from a family that is "really connected to the gift of song". Her father a pastor, Dione's first introduction to music was in the church. She was playing organ at age four, and was the musical director of the church by age ten. When she first broke into the music industry, her premiere release, *Open Your Eyes*, 2004, was nominated for a JUNO award. It certainly set the pace for what has been a musical journey filled with accomplishment. Dione Taylor has played for Queen Elizabeth II – twice – as well as in the White House, and the list of prestigious performances only continues to grow.

When asked about some of the best highlights of her musical career to date, Dione Taylor offers this:

"Singing with, and being able to meet Patti LaBelle in Montreal was amazing. She looked gorgeous. When I first met her, she could barely talk, trying to preserve her voice. I told her a remedy I knew of, and I heard her asking for it. That night, she absolutely killed it! Playing at the White House was another amazing experience too. Dr. Billy Taylor, the Artistic Director for the Kennedy Center asked me to come and perform during black music month".

Taylor's most recent release (*Born Free*, 2015) is garnering a lot of attention, so the conversation naturally shifted to a discussion on the process, the intention behind it, and Dione's inspiration to create the seven track album. When talking about the project, Taylor explains;

"My mom always hoped that I would release a "gospel" album. For years I declined because I misunderstood and felt that I didn't have the right or the place to sing gospel music anymore because of my beliefs/convictions - or maybe my LACK of beliefs/convictions! I am a part of special and unique group of people called "PK's" or Pastor's Kids. Growing up within the Pentecostal/Apostolic umbrella of Christianity was an interesting challenge. We were expected to be and act perfect within an obviously imperfect world. When you see hypocrisy first hand and head first it really messes up your faith! Some choose or learn to ignore and turn the other cheek while others simply cannot just let things be. There are two types of pastor's kids – the first type are the ones that live by the book and follow closely in the footsteps of their parents and the church and God. The second type, the Prodigal, are ones that are Worldly and willful and strong. They are termed "backsliders", and considered to be fallen from faith and grace. Somewhere between the two is where I have chosen to reside. I choose to spread unconditional love through my music. The word Gospel means truth. It takes a lot of courage to speak your truth, and takes balls and voice to live your truth. *Born Free* is



the Gospel according to my truth. Some of the topics covered in this album were a difficult process for even me to become clear on, so I am really proud of it".

When asked to contemplate what inspires Dione as a writer in whole, she says; "I am inspired by people. It's very interesting when you talk about truth and spirituality. You find out that people are so different from one another – they vibrate differently. That is a huge source of inspiration for me..".

When prompted to talk about what she thinks are her strongest attributes as an artist, Taylor provides this insight; "Probably my personality, and my honesty. I also spent a lot of time practising in my own space before I dug a little deeper and took the chance of sharing my music, so, I think that being able to push my boundaries has really made me grow too".

Taylor is also swift to offer some words of advice to other aspiring artists. She says, "If you have a "plan B", then don't get into the music business! Go and do it 100%. Have fun, and do everything with integrity!"

The conversation organically led to asking the question: what does Dione want listeners to know about her?

She says; "It may sound a bit cheesy, but, I want people to feel something. I want something to resonate, or people to investigate. Investigate themselves, and ultimately learn something about themselves".

Dione Taylor has been on tour in support of *Born Free*, and for those who would like to see her live, there are several shows of mention in the months to come. She has performances scheduled at the Beaches International Jazz Festival, the Markham Jazz Festival and the Kitchener Blues Festival, to name a few. Most notably, she is slated to perform at the upcoming Women's Blues Revue on November 18th at Massey Hall. This year marks the 30th annual event, and will once again feature the finest musicians in the business. For more info, visit the Toronto Blues Society's website at www.torontobluesociety.com.

For more information on Dione Taylor, and for a complete list of performance dates, visit www.dionetaylor.com.

Erin McCallum

Singer, songwriter, guitarist, bandleader