



N'dambi - *Pink Elephant*

Soul music has produced some serious truth tellers in its most glorious past. Finding the conviction to pursue our fondest dreams and the courage to face-up to our darkest truth is perhaps the artist's greatest challenge. *Pink Elephant*, the long-awaited Stax Records debut from stirring soul singer N'dambi, explores the art of revelation. "I want to write about the elephant in the room," she explains of her third U.S. release. "They see her but refuse to acknowledge or talk about her, let alone confront her. That's why I'm here."

Pink Elephant was recorded in Santa Monica, California, with producer Leon Sylvers III, whose credits include work for Shalamar, Blackstreet, Gladys Knight, The Whispers, Lakeside and many more. N'dambi insisted the record have a modern sheen yet adhere to the sturdy influence of classic R&B and soul artists like Slave, Heatwave, Michael Jackson, Betty Davis, Isaac Hayes, Smokey Robinson, and The Sylvers. That led her to The Sylvers' famous producer, big brother, Leon. Working in the studio with the veteran producer forced her to dig deeper than she had before, pushing her voice into a higher register on some tracks while layering her molasses-drenched vocals into cushy multi-part harmonies on others.

N'dambi's purposeful songwriting offers the listener detailed lyrical snapshots largely created from observations, rather than her own life. "Sometimes I write from my experience, but mostly I use my imagination to express myself through story telling," she explains. "I think of the place, the time, the setting of a story, and invent a situation that shines a light on a particular issue or theme. They are rarely from my own life. More often, they're someone else's story."

The striking singer's storytelling skills are at peak form on *Pink Elephant* with tunes like the Rod Temperton, '80's hip-hop flavored "Nobody Jones," the story of a girl with big dreams who won't let her humble beginnings stop her, and the delicious "L.I.E.," a tale of a man living a double life along New York's Long Island Expressway. Delusions of love spring up in the old school, love-gone-wrong melodic funk of "Daisy Chain"; "Ooo Baby," is the smooth-grooving tale of reconnection with a former lover; while the blues-inflected "Imitator," finds a young woman suffering over the collapse of her lover's promises. "You're not the man I used to know, you're an imitator," she sings on this mid-tempo urban gem. The hope of true love cries out in "The One," a disarming jazz-tinged ballad kissed with a touch of classic Stax.

The album's lead single "Can't Hardly Wait," is a biting chunk of scorching sarcasm delivered in the commanding singer's rich tone. Her opening complaint, "I don't know why I keep f***in' wit you," perfectly expresses the inability to turn a listless love loose. "It's about being in a relationship that has gone awry," **N'dambi** explains. "She knows good and well way before now that it's no good, but she can't get over the hump enough to get out of it."

"Mind Blowin'," a love song to the art and craft of music itself, features elements inspired by Isaac Hayes' 1974 classic blaxpotation film *Truck Turner*, primarily channeling the supreme swagger those films represent. She sings and performs her own drum beats on the irresistible "The World Is A Beat," a percussive and pointed lament about the current state of the music business.

The daughter of strict Baptist ministers in Dallas, Texas - only two kinds of music were allowed in **N'dambi's** house – gospel and country. Church was the center of the family's life in every way and there was no middle ground. Secular music was forbidden, but its irresistible allure eventually trickled into her life and began impacting the maturing young singer. Blessed with a deep contralto, **N'dambi** became especially enamored with the male singers from the '70s and '80s she'd heard and identified with while hanging out with cousins and friends. The funky soul of Bar-Kays' Larry Dodson, the sophisticated syncopation of Earth, Wind & Fire's Maurice White and the notorious abandon of the Ohio Players' Sugafoot influenced her heavily. Later, the mysterious, uninhibited imagination of Nina Simone and Mahalia Jackson also became musical and cultural touchstones.

Her independent streak led to college and a degree in English and creative writing from Southern Methodist University. Her developing, expressive voice, the poetic irony of her skillful writing ability and her musicianship as a classically trained pianist spurred **N'dambi's** musical ambition. **N'dambi** sang back-up and collaborated with another rising soul seeker, Erykah Badu all the while honing her artistry and slowly building a fiercely loyal fan base that resonates with the organic, authentic approach to her life and music.

N'dambi delivered her debut solo CD *Little Lost Girl Blues* in 1999. Since then she has released the two-disc set *Tunin' Up & Cosignin'*, and the 2005 set *A Weird Kind Of Wonderful*, which was released only in Japan. On *Pink Elephant*, **N'dambi** ingeniously distills soul-deep inspiration into a sensual style of elegance and power, making her a fundamental new addition to the Stax legacy.

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