



**Will Downing Returns with 14th
Tasteful & Timeless Offering, *Classique*,
Available June 16th**

*20th Anniversary recording
boldly features signature renditions of
David Ruffin, Barry White and The Originals, Plus 7 Self-Penned Songs*

Taking his inspiration from the French term *Classique* – an author, artist or work of art, of the highest excellence – Will Downing returns with his 14th collection of sensual grooves and true love primers. *Classique* is his second album for Peak Records (in stores June 16 via the Concord Music Group) and a triumphant encore presentation following the challenges he faced creating his Peak debut, *After Tonight* (recorded while battling the muscle disorder Polymyositis). Back in top form, Downing's sensitive touch is felt throughout the project - singing, writing, arranging and producing, the latter mostly in collaboration with his dear friend and much-in-demand ace Rex Rideout.

Highlights of *Classique* include the hypnotic tick-tock pulse of “*More Time*” (a recurring theme of Will's regarding finding more hours in the day for love), the feel-good summer groove “*Something Special*” and what will surely become this album's top contribution to his personal best canon “*I Won't Stop*,” a passionate backbeat driven declaration of eternal love. He waxes especially spicy on the clever “*Just Think About It*” and in the sexy vocal he shares with singer Sherrida on the funky call and response breakdown of “*Love Suggestions*.”

As always, Downing respectfully dips back into the timeless wax of old for three numbers. Interestingly, all three of them are songs originally made famous by three legendary gentlemen of Soul. The first is “*Baby, I'm For Real*,” a monumental 5-weeks-at-#1 smash first penned, produced and arranged by Marvin Gaye in 1969 for his favorite Motown vocal quartet, The Originals. Will recaptures that group vibe by sharing the mic with Phil Perry, whose powerful tenor and trademark falsetto flights play dynamically against his own smooth baritone. Perry, who was a member of just such a singing group called The Montclairs, taps into that experience with overdubbed harmonies.

Next is a stroll through Barry White's very first hit from 1973, “*I'm Gonna Love You Just A Little More Baby*,” Will's version of which also recently graced the Rideout-produced compilation *The Strength of a Woman* (in support of breast cancer research for African American women). Finally there's Will's version of original Temptations lead tenor David Ruffin's 1976 solo masterpiece “*Statue of a Fool*” (a.k.a. “*Name It After Me*”), a cover of the 1969 Jack Greene country classic that is among Ruffin's most poignant recordings. Will tenderly delivers the

evocative lyric as well as the heavenly backing harmonies for a rendition that goes straight to the heart.

Beyond the music, Downing is a conscientious humanitarian, proven by his role as a spokesperson for the *American Stroke Association* which has become even more important to him in the wake of prominent victims such as Luther Vandross, Ron Isley and Coretta Scott King. Whenever possible on tour, Downing conducts the charity bowling event “*Strike Against Stroke*” to raise funds towards greater stroke awareness and education in the African American community, which is disproportionately affected. The American Heart Association awarded Mr. Downing for his efforts, honoring him as a Celebrity Ambassador in their *Power to End Stroke* national campaign. Off the road, Will indulged his love for photography by self-publishing the 2005 coffee table book *Unveiled Series I*, and relishes his ultimate life roles of loving husband and father.

Classique is quintessential Will Downing from start to finish...a quiet but emphatic statement on the strength and confidence this Brooklyn native has garnered as he celebrates his 20th anniversary as “*The Prince of Sophisticated Soul*” – a career in which the man and his artistry have been recognized for excellence from NARAS to the NAACP.

Classique in stores June 16th.

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