

# Byron Cage

## “Live At The Apollo: The Proclamation”



One of today's most popular praise and worship leaders, Byron Cage, known to his fans as “The Prince of Praise”, has become one of the most popular acts in gospel music. The mass appeal of his songs has endeared him to thousands and seen his music sung from choir stands across America. Songs like “The Presence Of The Lord”, his breakout hit, followed by “I Will Bless The Lord”, and the current smash “Broken But I’m Healed” have made the GRAMMY Award nominee and multiple Stellar Award winner a staple in today’s

gospel musical landscape. He’s been part of the new wave of praise of worship being introduced in African America church. Now Cage continues that legacy by preparing to take it to the next level with the new project Live At The Apollo: The Proclamation.

Recorded live at the Apollo Theatre in Harlem in New York City on April 26, 2007, the night was a dream come true for the recording artist. Having the opportunity to stand on a stage that legends have appeared, the experience was quite humbling for Byron. “I’m so thankful that when I talked to management and my label about doing the next recording at the Apollo, they thought it was a great idea,” says Cage. “But the moment for me came when I saw ‘Byron Cage’ on the marquee. I thought ‘Wow, this is so legendary.’ Major stars like Stevie Wonder, Chaka Khan and so many people have come through there. I had performed on the stage of The Apollo before, but for me to be the first one to record a live gospel CD at The Apollo is historic.”

Historic it was and many gospel music luminaries came out to salute Cage on that night including Donald Lawrence, Dr. Teresa Hairston, Rodney "Darkchild" Jerkins, Rev. Drs. Grainger & Jo Ann Browning (Cage's pastors), Dr. Bobby Cartwright, Bishop Donald Hilliard, Jr. and Dr. Bobby Jones, who opened up the live recording with an introduction of Cage. Super producers PAJAM, comprised of Paul “PDA” Allen, J Moss and Walter Kearney, were also in the house as the project’s production team. A packed crowd welcomed Cage with open arms and strong enthusiasm during the incredible night of praise and adoration to God.

The title of the project, The Proclamation, came to Byron while he was attending a gospel music convention. While there, he heard a fellow gospel artist mention they were planning to move in a more “inspirational” direction and would be omitting the name Jesus in their songs. “I remember sitting there and starting to cry,” Cage recounts. “I thought, ‘Lord what has

happened to us that we feel like your name isn't good enough for us? Why do we feel like to reach the masses we have to leave your name out?" That was the beginning of the concept for the new CD, *The Proclamation*.

The title tune, penned by Cage, centers around proclaiming the name of Jesus. With a rousing orchestral and percussive opening, the first song makes a strong musical declaration. From note one, the combination of impeccable vocals and a cranking band makes this one of the album's most powerful cuts. He says, "When people hear this song, I want them to say, 'Yes, it's about the name Jesus'. Although we have large ministries, Christian conferences and speak about "going to the next dimension", the name 'Jesus' isn't spoken in our churches as much as it used to be. My passion is to bring the name of Jesus back to the forefront. It's not like the name Byron, or any other name; there is no name higher."



It's because of that reason Cage decided to drop the popular moniker given to him by his Pastor, Co-Pastor Jo Ann Browning of Ebenezer AME Church in Fort Washington, MD, "The Prince Of Praise". "I dropped the title 'The Prince Of Praise' because I never want to mislead people or let them think I'm trying to be elevated to anything," explains Cage. "I don't want anything to distract people from seeing Jesus in me. I am a meek and lowly person that God has called to this destiny. It's all for His glory."

A musical wonder, "With All Of My Might" is a celebratory, festive number. The lead single is an exciting, captivating track which begs the listener to praise God with all of their might. Destined to be sung in countless churches, the song is already blaring out on gospel radio stations nationwide. "I wrote 'With All Of My Might' because I love the story of David," says Cage. "I love when he talks about coming back to Jerusalem with the Ark of the Covenant. There was such a celebration that he danced so much – with all of his might – right out of his clothes. But his wife, Micah, was jealous of him. In spite of those who don't want us to praise Him, I am determined that I'll not only sing with all my might, but I will praise Him with all my might", says Cage.

Reminiscent of the Clark Sisters sound, "I've Got A Reason", is a traditional-flavored, yet spunky track. The feel-good song reminds each Christian that there's always a reason to be thankful. Byron says, "I love the simplicity of 'I've Got A Reason'. If you don't have a reason to praise God for all He's done, then just sit there. But if you have a reason to give God glory and praise, then this song is the time to jump up and have a good time. It's Praise & Worship 101." Also filled with praise, "Worship The Lord" is an invitation to lift up the name of the Lord. Midway through the tune, the melody from the well-known Christmas carol "O Come Let Us Adore Him" is inserted with new lyrics, "I'll Praise Your Name Forever", closing with some good hand-clapping, foot-stomping music.



Jazzy gospel songbird Kim Burrell opens up on “If You Never”, a song about being content no matter the situation. Cage calls PAJAM producer and vocalist extraordinaire J Moss to the stage for an impromptu performance on this relaxed and inspirational cut written by Cage. “More Than You’ll Ever Know”, penned by songwriting great, V. Michael McKay is another favorite of Byron’s. The melodic ballad’s theme focuses on the greatness of Jesus. Cage’s background vocalists, directed by well-known singer DeWayne Woods, sound wonderful on this moving song.

“Royalty”, a slow, reflective track acknowledges the Savior and His matchless qualities. Strumming from an acoustic guitar sets the stage for an intimate time of worship for the lover of God. Cage lets loose towards the end of the track and the Spirit of the Lord takes over. “I can’t listen to ‘Royalty’ while I’m driving because every time I have to pull over,” says Cage. “There is the oil of God on that song. When I did the song on the night of the recording, I honestly didn’t think I would be able to go on. The power of God came in that night and it was an authentic declaration of who He is.”

Grandma will love the old-time church feel of “When He Comes Back”. With a focus on the hereafter, the song is a reminder of the promise of Heaven for God’s children. Containing a special anointing, “Your Spirit” sets the atmosphere for God’s presence. Cage beckons worshipers to “speak well of the Spirit Of God” while lifting hands. It’s a powerful song of worship.

“Anyhow”, another Byron Cage creation was written “at a very difficult time” in his life. Joining Cage is former R&B crooner Dave Hollister on the mellow, urban-influenced cut. The song begs the Christian to praise God throughout the toughest of circumstances. The artist throws in a chorus of “Hallelujah Anyhow” from his mentor, Thomas Whitfield. Merging the old with the new, the collaboration is a clever one.

The late Maestro, Thomas Whitfield, would be proud of Cage today. Cage credits him with assisting him in understanding the importance of worship and admired the way he “had the ability to lead the corporate worship experience where the presence of the Lord would be ushered in.” Hailing from Grand Rapids and growing up in Detroit, Michigan, Cage was surrounded by the greats of gospel music and was influenced largely by Bishop James Abney in addition to Whitfield. After attending Morehouse College in Atlanta, he joined New Birth Cathedral, at that time with only 700 members, pastored by Bishop Eddie Long. Cage released two moderately successful albums in the late 90s, but rose to fame with the 2003 release of his self-titled GospoCentric debut which spawned his mega-hit, “The Presence Of The Lord” as well as “Psalm 3” and “There Is A Name”. The project netted five Stellar Awards including “Best

Male Vocalist” and “Best CD Of The Year” and a Soul Train Award for “Best Gospel Album, 2004”. Next came An Invitation To Worship which contained the hits “I Will Bless The Lord” and “Broken But I’m Healed” peaking at #2 on the Billboard Top Gospel Albums chart and earning Cage his first GRAMMY Award nomination. With all of those successes behind him, Live At The Apollo: The Proclamation is certain to follow suit.

Cage says, “I’m so thrilled that the night of the recording came off as well as it did. I had the best singers, the best set, the best everything. I wanted people that came out that night to feel such an overwhelming presence of the Lord and a church environment. But ultimately, during the night of recording The Proclamation, I wanted people to cross their legs and say, ‘Now that’s how you do gospel music.’”