

JONATHAN BUTLER

“Brand New Day”



We all love to see one who has experienced terrible odds overcome and persevere. With all that Jonathan Butler had against him growing up, it's clear that only God's plan helped him to endure almost unbelievable circumstances to become one of today's most revered recording artists. A two-time GRAMMY Award nominee, Jonathan Butler has simply been blessed. He's seen success on the mainstream side of music and is known as a jazz and pop icon, but it's his passion for gospel music that has recently taken center stage. With the release of ***Brand New Day***, Butler solidifies himself as a force to be reckoned with in gospel music.

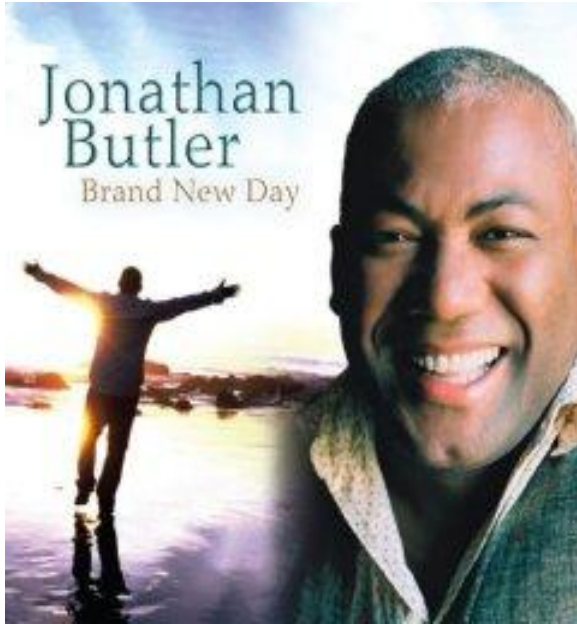
Raised in the backdrop of Cape Town, South Africa, Butler was well-acquainted with the now-abolished apartheid. He grew up in abject poverty (living in a metal shack) as the youngest of twelve children. In an environment that could easily have discouraged the young Butler, he escaped through the medium of music. He was “so excited about music” which was salvation from the harsh realities of his life. His proficiency on the guitar opened up opportunities for performances, one of which caught the attention of London-based Jive Records president Clive Calder. He was signed to the label and his single became the first song by a black artist to be played on white radio stations in South Africa.

That partnership ultimately resulted in the smash hit, “Lies”. His biggest song to date peaked at #5 on the Billboard charts and won him his first GRAMMY nomination. That hit was followed by “Going Home”, an instrumental masterpiece earning him his second GRAMMY nomination. Through the years, his exceptional talent and innovative musical interpretations have won him legions of fans and brought him international notoriety.

Jonathan credits his success to his relationship with Jesus Christ. A born again Christian for 26 years now, church has always been a part of his life. “At home God's name was always mentioned and my mother used to sing in church,” says Butler. But it was his late brother-in-law who led him and his wife of 24 years, Barenese, “to the cross”. A true God-fearing family man – he and his wife are the proud parents of three children – Butler's faith ultimately would be expressed through his music.

His entrance into gospel music began with a simple worship tune. His mega-hit with Kirk Whalum, “Falling In Love With Jesus”, found him not only crossing musical genres, but introducing himself to a brand new audience of gospel music lovers. His first all-gospel project and Maranatha debut, *The Worship Project*, continued where “Falling In Love” left off and allowed the artist to spread his wings during a series of beautifully-penned and highly reflective worship tunes. He was also featured in the critically-acclaimed *Gospel Goes*

Classical project, recorded live at the University of Birmingham's Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center, with Juanita Bynum backed by a 75-piece orchestra and a 100-voice choir. The Billboard-charting CD, with renowned arranger/conductor, Dr. Henry Panion, III, at the helm, allowed Butler to revisit "Falling In Love" and to duet with Bynum on the worshipful "I Don't Mind Waiting".



Now Butler is preparing to release his second Maranatha project, ***Brand New Day***, a collection of uplifting and empowering gospel tunes. A follow-up to his *Worship* project, Butler calls this his "praise project" and it displays even more of this talented man of God. Co-produced with Luther "Mano" Hanes (CeCe Winans, Andrae Crouch, Israel Houghton), the CD brings a new sound to the ministry of Jonathan Butler, but never veers away from the classic styling he's known for. The title tune *Brand New Day* is a perfect, invigorating track for Monday morning or in fact, any morning. A horn-driving, exciting, catchy hook makes this one a jewel. Representative of a change in the artist's life, the up-tempo song is one of thanks to God encouraging the listener to leave yesterday behind and start afresh.

The rock-edginess of *Gonna Lift You Up* helps to celebrate the goodness of God. "I co-wrote the song with Israel Houghton (Israel & New Breed)," says Butler. "If people get to know me, they know lifting up the name of Jesus is what I'm about. The song is truly an expression of that." *Gonna Lift You Up* is accented by a memorable chorus and a musical feast of driving instruments while begging the listener to elevate the praise. *You Are My Everything* contains pretty licks of an acoustic guitar and is a sweet and solemn, God-directed ballad.

He shines brightly on the reflective and emotive *Mercy*. Sung with his daughter Jodie, the lyrics of the tender and mellow cut highlight one of God's most notable characteristics. About the song, Butler says, "*Mercy* came out as a worship cry I had one morning. When I think of the Lord, I can't help but cry out for mercy. He's truly the God of mercy." Butler's love affair with the guitar is demonstrated through the smooth, silky notes of *Tell Me (Do You Still Love Jesus)*. The sparse instrumentation and Jonathan's deeply moving vocals plead for an answer during the introspective cut.

Brand New Day is a wonderful expression of God's love and provides the Christian with new songs to sing to the Lord. For Butler, it is truly a "brand new day". "I have longed to be a blessing to the body of Christ," says Jonathan. "It's been amazing to see God's plan unfold for my life. I truly feel that it's time for me to step into my ministry and be recognized as a minister of music in the body. This is where I belong."