

All Crown Up

By: Angeli Kakade

For almost 13 years of his life, Michael Keith recorded, rocked out with, and became family to three other men that once made up the infamous R&B group, 112. Two years later, since his controversial split from the group, Keith is proving to the world that this former fun loving "bad boy" is all grown up; making mature, soulful, and real music.

When Keith first had the urge to start his solo career, he was aware it was going to be a challenge. "People kept wondering if I could actually do it. With 112, we all had our own roles that we brought to the table. And even if we had all been singing before 112 was put together, people don't like change," he said in response to these challenges. Despite the skepticism from critics, Keith was determined to make his fans believe in him once again. "I can tell you all day that my music will make you believe, but I'd rather show you. Put me on stage, put my album on and I'll make you believe," said Keith. And with the September, 2008 release of his self titled debut album, he is doing just that.

While we all remember the upbeat, fun loving songs from 112 (Peaches & Cream anyone?), the new album represents Keith's life as an adult; the good and the bad. One of my most memorable tracks from the album is called Father. Growing up without one, as so many unfortunate children are forced to do, the song is about his reconciliation with his own father, after becoming one himself. "I can write about the hard stuff now... I had to really go through something in life to write this way," explained Keith.

Despite having now launched a successful solo career, Keith still gives homage to where he got his start. In response to his departure from 112, Keith continues to stick to his words stating, "I absolutely love those guys, and they are my brothers. I appreciate 112 and the movement. However, there were some differences that contractually were not right." To clarify, it seems the group was under contract to split all revenue in 4 ways. At one point, Keith noticed his publishing checks were not adding up and had approached the other members about it. According to Keith, Q and Daron Jones felt they each had done more work than Keith and thus took more than their agreed 25%. Keith felt, and still feels, that if there was a problem, a discussion should have occurred prior to taking any action. "There were times I felt I had done more work and it didn't seem fair," he said. Keith continued with a quote from Malcolm X, "If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything." So, in taking his own stand, Keith chose to leave the group.

With the music industry in a much different state now than it was at the height of 112, I asked Keith what role he thinks R&B still plays

in today's scene. And despite having musical influences like Kurt Cobain and a certain respect for the "free thinking rocker," Keith still claims that R&B is the true soul of music stating, "In my opinion, you can't carry the soul of a person without soul music."

One thing is for sure, Michael Keith has incredible talent. I asked him what his favorite love song of all time was, and before I knew it, I was listening to him sing "For All We Know" by Donny Hathaway! With a spring tour in the works and the album now available on iTunes, he is well on his way in proving to the world Michael Keith is all grown up and here to stay.

For more information on Michael Keith, visit www.michaelkeithonline.com

é

