

Jennifer Hudson Bio

Every decade or so, a new voice emerges that is transcendent, timeless. In the '60s, Aretha was royalty; the '70s were under Chaka's control; Whitney owned the '80s and Mariah direct the '90s. With this new decade, it could be very well be all about Jennifer Hudson. Together with her high-powered soulful style, the 26-year old Chicago native had already attained feats that are earmarked for most young singers' dreams. The former American Idol contestant nabbed a much-deserved Academy Award for her memorable role as "Effie" in the 2006 movie adaptation of the Broadway musical Dreamgirls along with Golden Globe, SAG, BAFTA and Broadcast Film Critic's Association Awards.

An NAACP Image Award and Soul Train "Entertainer of the Year" Award winner, Jennifer's now prepared to make the same kind of impact on the world of music she'd made on the silver screen with the much-anticipated release of her sizzling Arista Records debut album. "I understand people have high expectations because of Dreamgirls. I didn't have a certain concept in mind when I started working on the record. I wanted it to show flexibility and versatility. My voice has different characters and I looked at each song as with different stories, since I am an actress too," says Jennifer, who starred at the 2008 summer box office hit Sex in the City. "They are all different – sassy, vulnerable, loud and obnoxious, dramatic, romantic, spiritual — and they're all a part of me.

"Indeed, rather than being an extension vocally of her Dreamgirls role, Jennifer's first CD reveals that she is more than capable of making music suited to her age! "It's tricky because I played a character in her 30s in the movie so the audiences heard me with more of an 'adult' voice. But I am just 26 and I have a lot of different sides to show." And while her Arista debut indicates that 'adult' side, it is also full of slammin' cuts that show Jennifer can deliver on tracks produced by the likes of 21st century-hitmakers Timbaland, Tank, The Underdogs and Stargate.

The infectious first single, "Spotlight" — produced by Stargate and written and co-produced by Ne-Yo — showcases exactly what Jennifer calls "the sarcastic voice," a story of insecurities within a connection. Jennifer expresses her skill as a powerful storyteller with the Tank-produced "We Gon' Fight." "In the song, everyone's telling me to pretty much throw the towel in on a relationship but this is a love that is worth fighting for, an 'us against the world' type of thing." The amazing "Pocketbook" (which features rapper Ludacris), composed and produced by Timbaland is "quite sassy, very much me. I talked with each of the authors and they created a sense for me, for who I am. This song represents one facet of my character! This is something I would say — it's attitude yet it's lively.

"To her first auspicious debut — with contributions from Robin Thicke, Diane Warren, and others slated — Jennifer Hudson brings a profound love for singing that began during her formative years in Chicago. "My first influence was my grandmother (Julia Kate Hudson) and my earliest memory of singing publicly was at seven when I sang my first solo in church," Jennifer recalls. "Then, four years later I sang at my great-grandmother's 90th birthday and the members of my family were like, 'she does not seem like a little girl!' Before that I used to walk around the house imitating Brandy and groups like Xscape and Jade. But Whitney was always there from when I was a kid. I used to make my own little duets with her on 'I Will Always Love You,' Jennifer recalls.

" Her innate ability to feel a song was further improved by listening to singers such as Aretha Franklin, Patti Labelle and she notes, "Notably Gladys Knight. I realized that a song needs to be something I can feel for me to be able to sing it rather than sing at it. How am I gonna move you if I am not moved by the song I am singing?

“Jennifer’s first professional role came with a local production of the musical *Big River* when she was nineteen. However, it was her exposure during the third season of TV’s *American Idol* in 2004 that introduced Jennifer Hudson into a nation duly impressed with her powerful soulfulness. It took a few songs for Jennifer to make it at the pre-show auditions: “I flew to Atlanta, slept in the big Georgia Dome and the first time I had to sing while others were auditioning too. They wanted an original tune but I didn’t have one so I did this kinda obscure song, “This Empty Place” that I first heard performed by Cissy Houston. Then, the judges wanted to hear something they knew so I did Celine Dion’s “Power of Love” and then “Survivor” by Destiny’s Child.]

“The rest is history. After *Idol*, Jennifer auditioned for the part of Effie in *Dreamgirls*, beat out thousands of contenders for the coveted role and went on to win an Oscar. “Sure, it was overwhelming but in a good way,” she reveals. Up to now, my career has been filled with surprises and blessings, back to back,” she cried. Now comes her all-important first album – “I am so fortunate to have an audience out of *Idol* and from *Dreamgirls* — all ages, children, grandmothers, gay, straight, and all races. People may think they know what to expect out of me but I wish to show them I’m more than only a one-trick pony when it comes to music!” As her Arista Records album shows, she an artist who evokes a timeless voice for this decade.