



Mali Music reveres and respects the power of his chosen art form. The singer, songwriter, and producer recognized music's impact at a very young age, treasuring it as a gift. At only eleven-years-old and without any formal training, he would get behind the keyboard at a local Savannah, GA church and play for hours in front of a packed house every single Sunday. For the young performer, it became about inciting physical, emotional, and spiritual change with nothing more than a beat, a melody, and a smile.

Decades later, nothing has changed on his full-length major label debut, *Mali Is...* [ByStorm Entertainment/RCA Records]. In fact, he's only gotten better at impacting emotions.

"I started making music so I could help put everyone at ease," he says. "Each Sunday that I came into this building, people were crying, praying, and repenting. My creativity had to be sharp to consistently come up with songs on the spot that reflected the emotion of the room. I had a responsibility early on, and I realized music could make you cry, make you dance, or even change your life."

Receiving Pro Tools and a computer as a gift for his fifteenth birthday, Mali divided his time between recording hundreds of songs in his bedroom and playing football at school. After casually making a MySpace page in 2008, he quickly developed a fervent following online. A flood of booking requests came in from around the country, and his statistics began to skyrocket. Fulfilling his fans' appetite, he released his first independent album, *The Coming*, selling out the pre-orders from his family's garage. Over the next year, he started playing sold out shows across the country leading up to the release of his sophomore effort *The 2econd Coming* in 2009. However, 2011 saw underground R&B's "best kept secret" get out.

Delivering a seismic performance at the BET Music Awards on the "Music Matters" stage, Mali effectively got the entire industry talking. He found himself meeting with superstar Akon the next morning as other executives clamored to learn more about this burgeoning phenomenon. He finally found the right home in 2013 though, signing to Mark Pitts' ByStorm Entertainment label at RCA Records—the home of Grammy

Award winning singer/songwriter Miguel. After another earthshaking BET Music Awards performance and his Essence Music Festival debut that year, the mainstream wholeheartedly embraced Mali's undeniable and uplifting blend of soulful R&B, invigorating hip-hop, and inspiring lyricism.

He goes on, "I wanted to earn respect as an artist from the world before I proclaim this triumphant message. I wanted to give everybody an introduction to who I am. I've got a beautiful story to tell. There have been struggles, and there have been victories. The whole time, there was always song. That's how you get Mali Music."

You'll *get it* after one listen to *Mali Is...* Carried by his impressive vocal range and dynamic production, the album harkens back to what he fondly refers to as "the times of Stevie Wonder and the age of Aretha Franklin."

Mali affirms, "I'm like a refresh button. I'm here to bring the power back to the person with the songs. It's about quality music, and it has to be distinguished, strong, and absolute."

That philosophy defines the album. In order to convey his own cohesive vision, Mali personally wrote every song on the record, while ByStorm Entertainment's Mark Pitts and Wayne Barrow serve as executive producers of the project along with Kirk Lightburn as A&R. In addition to producing a handful of tracks himself, Mali also enlisted the production talents of the iconic Jerry "Wonda" Duplessis and D'Mile.

"No Fun Alone" produced by Duplessis, begins with smoky jazz piano and bluesy guitar licks before giving way to the singer's instantly recognizable croon. Lyrically, he takes the opportunity to remind everyone, *"It's no fun alone."* On the other end of the spectrum, "Heavy Love" skates along on upbeat percussion and tasteful melodic leads punctuated by a bombastic groove of live instrumentation.

He grabs the mic for truly pensive, passionate, and poetic bars during "Little Lady". A soulful refrain resounds as he solemnly rhymes, *"Can't distinguish the laughter from the cries, bags under your eyes, so you use makeup to cover up what you cannot hide."*

His raps build into a thought-provoking statement declaring, *"You have daughters and they have sons who have daughters and those are the ones who have the opportunity to break the curses that make their mothers buy purses with letters on them to show they're not worthless."* This isn't just a cry for a change in music but in culture at large, and he's not afraid to let it out—loud.

Meanwhile, the single "Beautiful" lives up to its name. Written and co-produced by Mali as well as Duplessis and Arden Altino, the track glides from an energetic verse into a heavenly refrain that instantly shines and soars—living up to its title.

"This song is for those people who never stopped believing and always saw me for who I was," he reveals. "It's a letter to the ones in your life who were there when you were nothing, they were there when you became something, and they were there when you lost everything you had again. It's a tribute to everybody who helped me become who I am. They're truly beautiful, and I needed to say it."

Mali performed "Beautiful" on *American Idol*, and it immediately soared up multiple charts. It reached #16 on R&B/Hip-Hop Digital Songs chart and #36 Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs chart, heralding his arrival. Moreover, it clinched the #2 spot on the iTunes Top R&B/Soul Songs chart, while topping both the Gospel Digital Songs chart and Hot Gospel songs chart. Still, it's only one piece of the album.

On "Ready Aim," Mali nods to his hip-hop influences like Outkast and Drake with intricate and irresistible rapping. "I'm living my life," continues the artist. "I'm on this track, and I can't get off. It's like I'm on a train at full speed. Anybody can fire whatever they want at me, but you can't shoot me down. This one is like a fuel injector. It gives you that boost so you know you can accomplish your dreams."

Everything culminates on "I Believe". The track produced by Mali himself serves as the album's final destination, encapsulating his journey up to this point. Musically, a major piano melody entwines with a slick drum beat as Mali opens up yet again, professing "We all need faith." The track is as unique as it is uplifting.

"I've got something I need to share," he asserts. "There's a deeper message. It's the heart of everything I do, and I want to get that to everyone possible. That's the ultimate goal."

In many ways, everything comes back to the album's title. *Mali Is...* encompasses this enigmatic and enlightening artist. "My music is the real deal," he goes on. "I put so much of myself into it, and that's where the title came from. I believe everyone with a beating heart will be able to find themselves in some part of it."

With his dedication and vision, he's about to tap into music's power like never before with *Mali Is...*

"I want to inspire others to inspire," he concludes. "It's not just about surviving, paying your taxes, doing what you do to pay rent, and calling that life. It's about living, thriving,

and prospering. It's about following those pure and innate impulses to realize your full potential. I hope I can be the key to unlock that in somebody listening."



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