

XAVIER OMÄR

Moments Spent Loving You is a true meeting of the creative minds. R&B auteur Xavier Omär and heatseeking producer Sango (Frank Ocean, Tinashe) have crafted a winning sequel to their 2016 collaboration *Hours Spent Loving You*—an intricate and deeply-felt work diving deep into the complications of love, trust, and faith, with production that sounds both timeless and undoubtedly of-the-moment. Representing new creative heights for Omär and Sango alike, *Moments Spent Loving You* is teeming with sonic details waiting to be pored over, an equally essential document for the heartbroken and the lovestruck.

Born in California and raised in a variety of locations across the U.S., Omär started playing instruments at the age of 3 and eventually landed on the drums. “I was born into a musical family,” he recalls, his father a minister of music at their church and his brother diving deep into his own separate musical journey as well. “I was taking a lot of musical responsibility at that point—I was trusted with it.”

At the age of 11, Omär started playing the drums at church, and the following year he took further inspiration from his brother’s efforts at producing a rap group from his high school, “I’d go down there and try to figure stuff out, because I was getting into rap at the time,” he remembers about engaging with his brother’s setup; after he went to college and took his gear with him, Omär started figuring out how to produce for himself and others in his school. Eventually, his family moved back to Georgia, and he reconnected with a school friend and joined a rap group with him. “We did our own shows and everything.”

The group eventually broke up and Omär’s musical ambitions were temporarily sidelined: “I never wanted to be a solo artist, so when the group was done, I was done with music.” His family moved again, to San Antonio, as Omär kept writing music for himself, by himself. “I didn’t want

to rap anymore—I was writing stuff that sounded more like alternative rock,” he remembers. Then, *American Idol*’s audition process came to town, and Omär threw his hat in the ring; even though he got cut in the first round of auditions, spurred him to buy equipment and start recording on his own. “That made me angry,” Omär states while remembering the sting of rejection. “I wanted to prove to myself that I could do this.”

As SPZRKT, Omär recorded various projects while working within the world of Christian hip-hop. “As a Christian, I didn’t have any media or art that reflected my Christian viewpoint when it came to relationships,” he explains regarding the career move. “At that point, R&B was very dark—lots of drugs, everyone was disrespecting women—and I didn’t connect with it in that way. I wanted to have something I could point to that would reflect that, and that was the gift I was given.” After he met Sango at the end of 2012, the pair worked on a song called “Middle of Things,” which proved to be an underground hit: “As soon as that song came out, things started to change for me.”

Through Sango, Omär was introduced to L.A. where he continued to develop his artistry, in 2015 Omär published an open letter about wanting his music to be more places than just Christian spaces. “I got a lot of backlash, but that was a point where more people started listening to my music,” he recalls. Since then, he’s worked with Sango on *Hours Spent Loving You* and its thematic sequel, a creative partnership that’s been rewarding and exciting for both parties. “When you work with Sango, he’s doing things that people haven’t done yet—and if they’ve done it, they haven’t done it quite like him,” Omär enthuses.

Although Omär counts Coldplay’s Chris Martin, James Blake, and Pharrell as influences, he stresses that the only creative inspiration that went into *Moments Spent Loving You* was his and Sango’s striving for uniqueness: “I had to be original in every sense of the way. For this project, this is R&B where it sounds original to your ears.” Thematically,

Moments Spent Loving You tackles big-picture ideas about the little things in life—who we are, how we treat each other, and what we do to pick up the pieces after everything's fallen apart. "I picked up on things since my last relationship ended," he explains. "I've tackled changes, I've tackled faith, and I've spoken about frustrations in our faith. It's about what we want out of love in our relationships, and what we think love gives. There's frustration, and calling the other person out on things that need to change. It's not all happy love songs."

There's myriad moods to be found here, from the smooth evocations of "Just Get Here" and the skittering ache of "Veins" to the skipping, propulsive "Struck," a song about realizing the moment that you might be losing yourself in: "It's about that moment when you realize that you're really falling for somebody, but you still don't *really* realize it," Omär explains while talking about the song's thematic bent. "It's a moment where you get struck and you suddenly realize that all your confidence about this person is actually feelings and desires. This song gets more into what those feelings are."

"We just want people to embrace each moment, whether it's good or bad," Omär continues while discussing what he and Sango want to achieve with *Moments Spent Loving You*. "To live through it, to cherish it, to always be honest with themselves about where their heart is in every moment. We want people to persevere and succeed beyond whatever it is they're going through." And *Moments Spent Loving You* is undoubtable proof of their own creative success as well.