

MISSISSIPPI



Tyrone Gibson a.k.a Ty Gibson, P/K/A **Missippi**, doesn't have to utilize a superfluous vocabulary to hype his poignant voice or depend upon studio wizardry to enhance the rhythm & blues-meets-pop sound he was innately blessed with. The magic of this soulful storyteller's musical gift lies deep within, much like the rich complexity of his Southern heritage. Although he deliberately misspells the moniker of his birth state, **Missippi's** talent is anything but haphazard. His unique sound is like a cosmic force of soaring gospel melodies melded with electric funk rhythms that comes as naturally as breathing.

Much like legendary soul greats Sam Cooke, James Brown and Stevie Wonder, **Missippi** was enrolled in the school of music known as "church" at an impressionable age, subsequently earning a name for himself throughout the community as a singing sensation. "My grandfather was a preacher and since my mom directed two choirs, I was at church every Sunday and sometimes during the week. When I was five, I used to sing in front of the congregation, which was fun. People started asking me to sing at weddings, funerals, and birthday and anniversary parties. Basically, I sang and performed throughout all my years in school."

As a high school student, **Missippi**'s most memorable experience came when he toured for two years with the renowned gospel singing group, the Mississippi Mass Choir, developing a profound maturity and respect for being an authentic artist. "Gospel is what really influenced me most. The hardships many African-Americans have suffered in the South shaped a lot of great people who've turned their internal pains into words that make you want to scream and shout. That's what gospel music is all about: celebration, praise and victory."

Growing up in the heart of the South, **Missippi** faced his share of prejudices with pride. "My mom didn't allow us to use foul language, even when other people used it to degrade us. She would tell us that no matter how badly someone treated us, we shouldn't do the same to them. She taught us to remain humble and to think before we acted, which is how I've been able to steer clear of trouble." Part of that escape came when the college-bound singer made the leap to Texas where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Texas Southern University. While earning an education, **Missippi** successfully competed in talent shows and began experimenting with various genres of music, including classical, folk and country, the latter of which he was already familiar with.

"My mother loved Kenny Rogers. She'd put his tape in the 8-track and would clean and cook to it. If it wasn't for him back in the day, we probably wouldn't have made it through." After graduation, the crooner migrated further west, spending time in Seattle, Washington before making Oakland, California his home. The left coast would prove to be the corner of the earth where **Missippi** would set his life story to music. However, the remnants of his southern roots remained. "Music is a joy to my heart and there weren't too many opportunities in Mississippi, which is one of the reasons why I left. I've endured a lot over the years, having to chop cotton because those were the only jobs you could get growing up. Times were really rough on the whole family. The strength of survival comes from following your ancestors. To be able to go into the studio and express myself musically has been therapeutic and spiritual. I'm glad I grew up in Mississippi; it helped my music a lot."

"Rick (James) told me to make sure that when you leave, leave something behind of worth. I want to make music that says something," explained **Missippi**. "Through my music, I try to portray the stages of evolution that people go through on their path from hardship and suffering to triumph and understanding."

From Nat King Cole, Fats Domino, Sam Cooke, Curtis Mayfield, James Cleveland, Mahalia Jackson and Muddy Waters to Lionel Ritchie, Michael Jackson, New Edition, Johnny Gill, Van Halen and Kiss, **Missippi** salutes his influences and credits them for molding his musical career. "Each one of those artists has a certain characteristic that relates directly to me. Their artistic contributions helped me develop into the artist **Missippi**."

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