

RELIGION

Sudden Death Of 5 Year Old Daughter Further Illuminates Poignancy And Pain Of Vocalist

Life has dealt soul singer Montrel Darrett another harsh blow. The singer watched both of his parents die of cancer. He watched his brother go to prison. He watched crime take place in Nashville's notorious crime-ridden John Henry Hill housing project where he grew up. He even watched his life flash by him as he served his own prison sentence for some misdemeanors. Montrel's music reflects the hard times he's faced. But, the hardest scene for him to watch was the sudden death of his five year old daughter, Charissa on Saturday, July 24, 1999. Montrel and his wife, Felicia were traveling on I-65 outside of Nashville, TN when their car careened off the side of the road during a thunderstorm. Montrel sustained only minor injuries and was released from the hospital later that same afternoon. Over that weekend, Felicia underwent surgery for her injuries and was later released from the hospital, but their daughter died in the crash.

This latest development in Montrel's life just sheds more light on the hurt, happiness and hope that has marked his soul's journey thus far. Buoyed by a George Clinton style of funk and a Bob Dylan style of writing, Montrel's music bristles with an iconoclasm that is unknown in the gospel music industry. "I'm not a gospel singer," Montrel interjects. "I'm an artist who loves

God." His honest devotion to God may put some of the self-righteous members of the congregation at unease though. His songs are based on such salacious topics as his addiction to sex from the age of seven, his suicide attempt, his brother's incarceration, his stint in the Gulf War and his extreme contempt for the gospel music industry itself. This isn't exactly "Amazing Grace" and "How Great Thou Art."

Music critics have compared Montrel's music to the social commentary of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On?" and "Ball of Confusion" by the Temptations. "Society plays a big role in the conditioning of a man's heart," Montrel says. "What's in the heart will proceed from your mouth. My music is real authentic. It's part of who I am in my life. It's not made up. It's been a part of me all my life. The other thing that separates my music is that it's live music with live instruments. There are no punchins, it's not studio made. A lot of music today is processed and regurgitated. This is not me trying to be somebody else. You've got a lot of record company-made artists, but this is Montrel."

The album's first R&B single and video, "Free" is a cry for help. "Our government is perverse and wicked," Montrel complains. "It's like can't we come together? We have to put our heads together. A white man killing a black

man and a black man killing a white man, it's still a killing. Killing is killing! Just because we're different doesn't mean we can't live together."

The revelations don't end there either. "My wife and I was about to get a divorce," Montrel confesses about the song "I'm Sorry." "I was being taught by people in the industry that in order to have sex appeal I can't be married. People told me women buy records and if you are married, they won't buy them. So, we separated, but then I said, 'I've got who I want and I don't care about no sex appeal.' I was sorry for some of the dirt I did to my wife Felicia and I wrote that song."

That same music industry heavily impacts our culture and it's for the industry that Montrel reserves his most stinging venom. "I hate the industry," he snarls. "I hate the spirit behind the industry. Jokers are gonna be jokers, but be real with me! I saw people smile in my face, but then they dog me."

The album epilogue is "The party is Over." Montrel muses "That's me looking at my brother's life. He got caught up in that drug thang. When you gonna get tired of this game? This life you living? You've lost everything, but that's when you can gain the most by coming to God because you don't have anything else. After all, all I am is a sinner



saved by grace." Montrel can probably use some of that divine grace right now as he comes to terms with his baby's death. Perhaps the words to his song "Hold On" will bring some comfort. As he sings of God's concern, Montrel sings "Just call My

[God's] name when your road is at its end, a hand to lend, I'm just a friend." For those wanting to make friendly gestures, in lieu of flowers, the family requests do-

nations be sent to the Charissa Darrett Foundation c/o N/Tymze at PMB 304 115 Penn Warren Drive; Suite 300; Brentwood, TN 37027.

Prayze Gospel Music Presents Soul In Concert

Prayze Gospel Music, a new gospel music label and production company in the Portland area, will be presenting a concert featuring the group SOUL from the Seattle, WA area. They are national recording artists and are currently signed to Trinity Records, which is a division of Hendrix Records. In addition to the concert, there will be a pre-event party where people will get the chance to meet with the group and other performers for the evening. The event will be taking place on Friday, September 3rd, 1999. It will be held at the Albina Christian Life Center, which is located at 5522 N. Albina in Portland, OR. The pre-event party starts at 5:00 PM and will lead directly into the concert, which

starts at 7:00 PM.

This is the first event being sponsored by the new label Prayze Gospel Music. This label is sure to be a national contender in the gospel music industry with its fresh new sounds and new ministry formats. It was founded in 1999, and is under the supervision of President/CEO Robert Thomas. It's goal is to promote gospel music through its' artists and gospel music events. This is just one of the many events that it is planning, and will soon be coming out with a new release in the upcoming months.

SOUL is a group comprised of nine members, which was formed from a Pacific Northwest talent search that was done by Trinity Records.

One of Portland's own, Nehemiah Booker, is a member of the group. They have performed all over the country, including gospel music's most prestigious event, the gospel Music Workshop of America. They have a fresh, new sound and are sure to rock the house in Portland.

Tickets are available at the following locations:

House of Sound * 3620 N. Williams
Pearl's Music * 3969 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

Reflection's Coffee * 446 NE Killingsworth

One Stop Record Shop * 1615 NE Killingsworth

Please contact us if you have any further questions at 503-289-0642 * prayzegospel@hotmail.com

Churches Offer Assistance to Turkey

"Our collective grief and prayers are with the people of Turkey," said David Leslie, executive director of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. "We are spreading the word about the human needs and are certain that churches will respond generously to assist in the recovery process." EMO's ecumenical partner, Church World Service, has already committed \$250,000 toward relief for people affected by

the earthquake in Turkey. \$100,000 will go toward the purchase of blankets, bedding, tents and traps. Cash donations to CWS can be made to Turkey Earthquake, c/o Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, interchurch Center, Suite B, 0245 SW Bancroft, Portland, Oregon 97201. People may also contact CSW directly at 1-800-297-1516 or P.O. Box 968, Elkhart, Indiana 46516. EMO is a statewide asso-

ciation of 15 Christian denominations including Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox bodies working together for justice and unity through theological education and dialogue, public advocacy and community ministry programs. EMO partners with Church World Service to aid in its mission of serving more than 80 countries around the world in disaster relief, human development and refugee assistance.

East-West Spiritual Practices at Interfaith Spiritual Center

Portland, OR. Free classes on spiritual practices from the world's religions are offered at the Interfaith Spiritual Center, located at 3910 SE 11th in Portland. The classes will be held on first Wednesdays from 6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. October through December. The calendar currently includes:

"Spiritual Practices for Daily Life" led by Ashley McCormack and Dale Rhodes on October 6th.

"Walking Meditation" led by Richard Eaton and Dales Rhodes on November 3rd. "Buddhist Meditation Techniques" led by Karin Miles and Richard Eaton on December 1st. For a brochure on these or other programs, call the Interfaith Spiritual Center at (503) 233-2026. The Interfaith Spiritual Center (ISC) offers a wide variety of resources for spiritual development and growth. Spiritual

mentor's form various world religious traditions offer individual direction and mentoring, as well as retreats and workshops on spiritual life and practices of major world religions. All services and resources are provided on a sliding fee scale that is based on income and ability to pay. The ISC offices are located at 3910 S.E. 11th in Portland, Oregon. Free parking is ample and the building is wheel chair accessible.

You are invited to a free seminar, "How to Have Financial Security and Live Debt Free" at Maranatha on Sunday, September 5, 2:30 to 4:30 PM. Presenter is Sharman Lawson of Financial Freedom Concepts. Call Jeff Parker, 503/449-6197 for more information.

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