

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Dreamgirls Star Puts Focus on Singing

Jennifer Hudson is used to defying expectations

(AP) -- Two years ago, the biggest question surrounding Jennifer Hudson's career was whether she could act.

Everyone knew she could sing; after all, it was her soaring, gospel-inflected voice that made her famous during her finalist run on "American Idol" in 2004. The question was whether her considerable talent extended to acting when she was cast in the drama-filled role of Effie in the movie adaptation of the musical "Dreamgirls."

An Oscar win for best supporting actress answered that handily, and roles in the summer blockbuster "Sex and the City" and the upcoming "The Secret Lives of Bees" have only reaffirmed her newfound gift. But as Hudson puts the focus back on her singing with her self-titled debut CD, she has to answer more questions — like whether winning an Academy Award last year has made it easier or harder for her to be seen as a singer.

"Harder!" she declares with a laugh.

"The pressure is more on the music than on the film side, which is odd," Hudson muses. "It's like everything is expected to be big coming from me and so it's like, 'OK, we know this is going to be



Academy Award winner Jennifer Hudson has put the focus back on her singing with a self-titled debut CD.

huge too.' So it's magnified, and a lot of attention on it and from what I hear it's extremely anticipated — so it's like, (sighs) 'OK!'"

But Hudson is hardly harried about the current release of "Jennifer Hudson." She's used to defying expectations.

"I don't believe in limits so I wasn't allowing myself to be limited and I wanted to show other sides of me, and to say 'Well, if you like this side of Jennifer, let me introduce you to another side,'" says Hudson. "I used to consider my voice a tree with

many branches and that's what to me this album displays, all these different sides of me."

Those sides were obscured her during acting ascent: While she had spent most of her adult life singing, once her acting career took off, she shelved her dream of making an album while making movies.

"If I'm acting I'm acting, if I'm singing I'm singing," says the Chicago native. "There's no doing both, because I don't wanna split my focus ... so one had to give way for the other."

While Hudson counts Whitney Houston among her chief influences, she was careful not to make a CD full of torch songs to showcase her powerful voice: "I didn't want to be type-cast as just a big ballad singer."

While "Jennifer Hudson" does contain soaring ballads and even her devastating rendition of "And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going" from "Dreamgirls," it also features a rap verse from Ludacris, a collaboration with T-Pain, production help from Ne-Yo and Timbaland and even a duet with fellow "American Idol" alum Fantasia.

"With her, she has such an amazing voice, you can pretty much pick any song, and she can sing it," said Harvey Mason Jr., one of the songwriters and producers on the CD who also worked with Hudson on the "Dreamgirls" soundtrack. "It really gave us a freedom to be really creative."

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Free OMSI Teen Night

The Oregon Museum of Science and Industry will offer teenagers ages 13-18 a free night at the museum filled with special programming and fun activities created just for them.

OMSI's first ever Teen-Only Night will feature cheap eats, a live DJ, Segway

rides, a Science Café discussion, and the opportunity to peruse the new brainteaser-filled exhibit Mindbender Mansion.

Music for the evening will be provided by DJ DMoeFunk who in addition to providing entertainment will

teach guests how to spin and the technical secrets behind the art of DJ-ing.

Teen-Only Night at OMSI will be held Saturday, Oct. 18 from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Adults are not permitted to attend, but OMSI will provide security and adult supervision throughout the evening.

Admission is completely free. Low cost food and beverages will be available for purchase.

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The Bungalow Rose in conjunction with The Portland Observer will sponsor a party for the local Head Start children on October 18th from 2-4pm. They'll enjoy games, food and fun. Treats will be donated by local merchants.