

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

With New Album, *Monica is Back*

Reasserts standing in urban genre

(AP) -- Monica, who debuted at 15 with the multiplatinum-selling CD "Miss Thang," wasn't one who succumbed to celebrity pitfalls as a child star.

But still, she says growing up was hard.

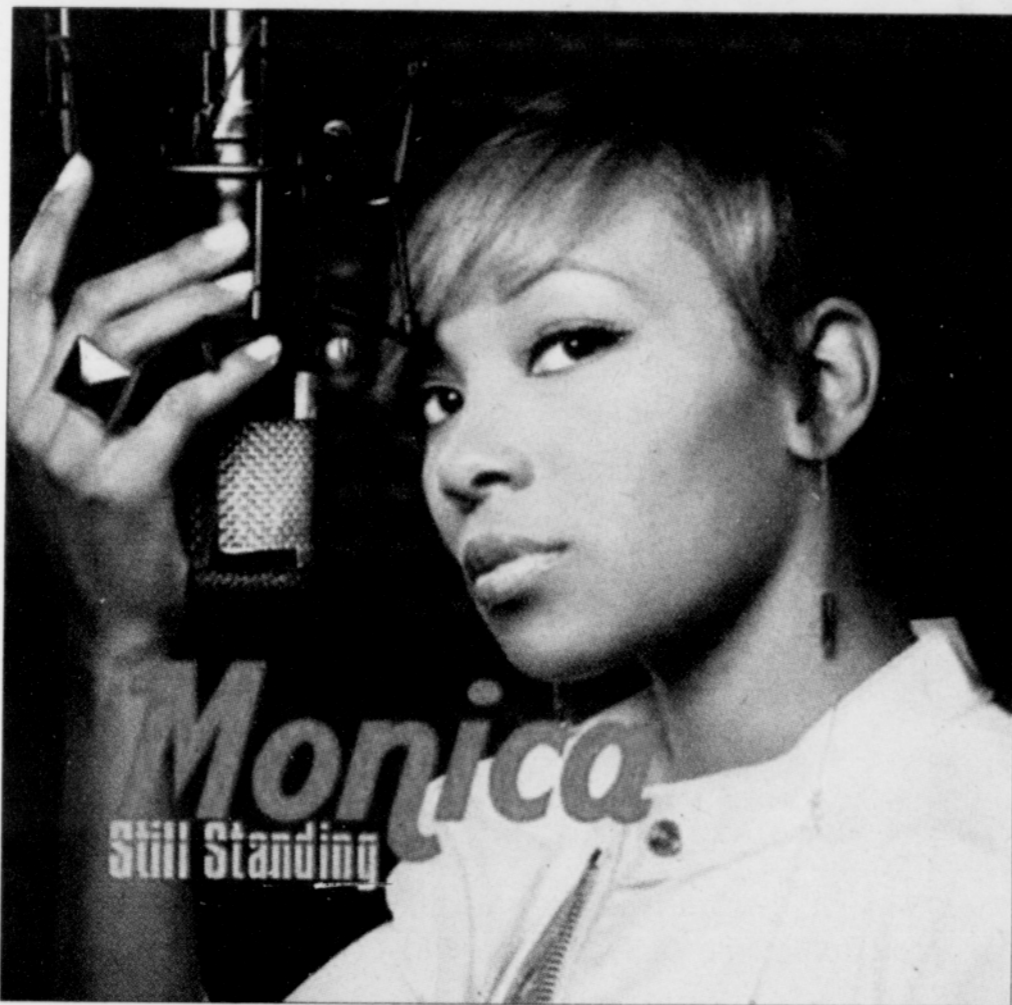
"I experienced a lot of different hardships. The suicide of my first love, the death of my grandmother, the loss of a lot of different things that happened in the public eye that I didn't get a chance to step away and grieve and live like your average person would," Monica, now 29, said.

That's why on her new CD, "Still Standing," you'll hear a familiar refrain from the singer proclaiming how, on the verge of 30, she's fully matured.

"When I say I'm not who I used to be, I mean that some of the things that's happened in my life, they were just consequences to my own actions, me not making great decisions, me not picking the right people to be around and keep in my company," she explained.

Keeping herself grounded not only helped her personal life — but her professional one too.

"Still Standing," her fifth album, debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard Top 200 albums chart last month, selling 184,000 units its first week,



Monica

according to Nielsen SoundScan.

"I was surprised to see those numbers. I had no clue," she said.

The success reasserts her standing in the urban music genre.

Her latest album's first single, the Deniece Williams-sampled "Everything to Me," is spending its fourth week on top of the R&B charts. She recruited Jamie Foxx for the remix of her next single, the bedroom groove "Here I Am," and she's planning a summer tour with R&B crooner Trey Songz.

What's also helped is Monica's reality show on BET — also titled "Still Standing" — connecting the R&B songstress to a younger audience. She says she's in negotiations with the network for a second season.

GRAND OPENING

April 17, 2010



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