

Yolanda Adams: The 'How Sweet the Sound' Interview

By Kam Williams
Special To *The Skanner News*

Ever since her late-Eighties debut, "Just as I Am," Yolanda Adams has triumphantly carried the torch for contemporary gospel and inspirational music via a dozen glorious albums. Stunningly beautiful, exceptionally educated, filled with the spirit and blessed with one of the most powerful voices in any genre of music, this former schoolteacher is a stately beacon of God's light.

Born in Houston on Aug. 27, 1961, Yolanda has earned numerous accolades for her shining efforts, including the first American Music Award for Contemporary Gospel Artist and four Gospel Music Association Dove Awards. Among the highlights of her career was winning five Grammy Awards which includes 1999's Best Contemporary Soul Gospel Album for "Mountain High... Valley Low" featuring her crossover breakthrough hit "Open My Heart," and 2005's Best Gospel Song, co-written by Ms. Adams herself, "Be Blessed."

Christened "The First Lady of Modern Gospel," Yolanda's pioneering blend of gospel with R&B infused with a touch of jazz continues to inspire her fans and transform the musical landscape. "The Yolanda Adams Morning Show" can currently be heard on radio stations all across the country.

Faith, Love, Forgiveness, Protection and Praise! These are just five of the ten gifts explored in Yolanda Adams new power-filled inaugural book, "Points of Power." Inspired by the Points of Power segment from her morning show,

Yolanda reveals her own personal experiences to show how the Bible will enlighten readers and provide them with insight and understanding to respond positively to life's challenges. "Points of Power" provides the tools, the wisdom and spiritual guidance for living a praise-filled, prayerful, and joyful life.

Here, she talks about her life and career, and about host-

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ing Verizon's "How Sweet the Sound," the country's most prestigious gospel music celebration and competition. Now, in its fifth year of celebrating the community and the power of gospel music, "How Sweet the Sound's" national finale will be staged in New York on November 4th at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn.

Kam Williams: Hi Yolanda, I'm honored to have this opportunity to speak with you.

Yolanda Adams: It's great to talk to you, Kam.

KW: What interested you in How Sweet the Sound?

YA: First of all, it gave me an opportunity to spend time



Yolanda Adams

with my great friends Donald Lawrence, CeCe Winans, Erica Campbell, Fred Hammond and Hezekiah Walker. Whenever we can hang out, it's wonderful. Unless we're on tour together, we usually don't have a lot of opportunities to see each other, other than at something special like award shows. So, I was excited to do this.

KW: What's it been like judging How Sweet the Sound? Is it similar to the job you do on BET's Sunday Best?

YA: No, I actually co-hosted with Donald this year. So, I didn't have to face the difficult challenge of judging these great choirs.

KW: Do you care to share which choir you think is going to win?

YA: The crazy part is that the finalists are the top choirs from all of the cities that we chose. So, there are no duds left in this selection of choirs. These really are just the cream of the crop, the best choirs in the U.S.

KW: How is picking the best Gospel group different from picking the best singer from a show like American Idol or The Voice?

YA: The only difference is whether you can feel the heart of the song, the heart of what they're trying to convey. You still have to be professional. The choir's moves still have to be in sync. So, you're looking at the same criteria you'd find on American Idol or Sunday Best.

KW: I told my readers I'd be interviewing you, so I'm going to mix-in their questions with some of my own. Larry Greenberg says, I just listened to "Victory" and I was truly blown away and inspired. Do you mind if I listen to it every time I start a new project?

YA: Not at all. Thank you so much, Larry. I appreciate it. [Laughs]

KW: Harriet Pakula-Teweles asks: Which of your songs has the most personal meaning for you?

YA: That's like asking: Which of your children is the most precious? When I write a song, it comes from the heart and is based on a specific experience. You can't really say that one experience is greater than another, because all of your experiences take you through life on this journey.

KW: Harriet also asks: Which one do you think has the biggest emotional impact on your audience?

YA: Wow! I have no idea. Some days it may be "Just a Prayer Away." Some audiences want "Victory," like Larry. Others want "The Battle Is the Lord's." I have so many songs that have impacted people in different ways. "Fragile Heart" is one that really took off years ago in South Africa when I had 20,000 people singing along with me.

KW: Finally, Harriet asks: Do you ever feel that the spiritual essence of a Gospel song's message is transformed when you sing in a secular arena instead of a church?

YA: No. No. Unh-uh. The message is still the same. The delivery is still the same. You have to understand that everyone has a heart, and when it hits, the emotion is there.

KW: Patricia would also like to know if you are interested in writing your autobiography.

YA: Nah, not yet. I don't think it's time yet. I still have a few more things I want to accomplish first. Maybe in another ten years.

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