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BOOKER T. JONES

"This album seems special to me," says Booker T. of *I Want You*. "It's more contemporary than my last one, and it's very personal. I'm much more exposed this time. I've opened up and become more receptive to other people's ideas. I've never done as much collaborating as I've done on this record."

When a musician who wears the adjective "multi-talented" like a custom-designed hat decides to share his work load with others, he's got a reason. "I'm capable of doing more," Booker admits with characteristic understatement. The arranger/producer whose busy hands have helped shape such diverse records as Sam & Dave's "Soul Man," Bob Dylan's "Knockin' On Heaven's Door," Barbra Streisand's *A Star Is Born* and Willie Nelson's *Stardust* claims he "used to want to do it all. But this time I let Michael Stokes produce. Ben Wright arranged the strings and horns. That left me room and time to spend on songwriting and singing."

Some measure of his commitment to the latter is revealed by the many weeks Booker devoted to just planning *I Want You*. Beginning last November (when he returned from a successful concert tour with Rita Coolidge), more than two months were spent trying to break ground for the project. "I was determined not to use the same old chord progressions. I didn't want this record to sound the same as anything else."

To that end, Booker began composing the album's songs, writing on piano and guitar. Then came collaborating on lyrics, with Leon Ware (on "I Came To Love You"); with Marlo Henderson ("Power In Your Love"), and Herbie's sister Jean Hancock ("Treasure Chest").

The cumulative result of all the planning and preparation is showcased on what sounds like the most refreshing Booker T. set yet. If the music, as always, is well crafted, it's also invigorating, underscoring Booker's intent to make it "as innovative, as close to the moment as it can be."

Booker has rarely been in better voice than he is on *I Want You*. Extending his purely musical sensitivity and sureness to vocals, he never fails to impress. Booker caresses the tender lyric of "Treasure Chest." In a mellow mood, he captures the delicate nuances of "Prize Possession" and glides through the funky-up pop of "Power In Your Love."

Next? "I have an instinct that it's time to get a band together and go on the road. But I also want to write, and I can't do that on the road. On the other hand, being on the road can stimulate my writing when I get home." He laughs. "It's an interesting conflict."

However it gets resolved, the "conflict" is sure to generate more of what Booker T. has already given the world in abundance: very special, very personal music whose appeal knows no bounds.

