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CECE PENISTON

It hardly seems fair. When the good Lord was passing out the singing ability, Cecilia Veronica Peniston had the good fortune to have gotten herself a second helping. In addition, CECE was blessed with a huge dose of personality.

Suffice it to say that not since Patti LaBelle has a young woman singer combined such spiritedness with such awesome soulfulness. Little wonder, then, that it took CeCe all of one record, the universally beloved "house" anthem "*Finally*," to establish herself as one of the most thrilling new soul divas of the early '90's.

Born a career military man's daughter in Dayton, CeCe began dreaming of a career as a singer nearly before she learned to spell Cecilia. But it wasn't until she was cast as Buttercup in her Phoenix grade school's production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *H.M.S. Pinafore* that anyone took her ambition seriously. "When I was small," she recalls, "I always told my mother that I wanted to sing, but it wasn't until that show that she realized I really could. From that point, I got a lot of support from my parents because they saw I was serious, and felt I had the talent to make my dreams come true."

At 16, CeCe starred in the Phoenix Black Theater Troupe's production of *Bubbling Brown Sugar*—and won the sort of reviews that immediately get framed. After she found time between rehearsals to set track records that still stand at her high school, she was included in *Who's Who Among American High School Students*.

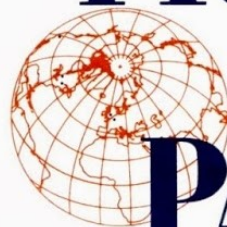
In 1989, while a freshman at Phoenix College, she was crowned Miss Black Arizona. The following year, she won the national Miss Galaxy pageant. And the year after that, the Phoenix-based record producer Felipe "D.J. Wax Dawg" Delgado invited her to sing on rapper Overweight Pooch's *FEMALE PREACHER* album, which she did with such electrifying conviction that A&M immediately commissioned Felipe to record her in her own right.

"*Finally*," the first track they cut, proved an immediate smash, confounding expectations by becoming one of the most-requested songs on CHR before topping *Billboard's* club music chart. No less a personage than Janet Jackson was overheard requesting the record at fashionable discotheques. With a virtual *Who's Who* of house—including Steve "Silk" Hurley and David Morales, Daniel Abraham, and DeVante Swing of Jodeci—taking turns producing, CeCe quickly headed back to the studio to record her debut album. "*You Win, I Win, We Lose*," is a meditation on the necessity of compromise in a romantic relationship—startlingly wise for a young woman of CeCe's modest years.

Be it an irresistibly propulsive dance tune like "*We Got A Love Thang*" (the LP's next single) or a smoldering ballad like "*I See Love*," CeCe invests each track with positively spine-tingling expressiveness. As the lady herself explains, she isn't simply singing, but... "singing." "There's a big difference between the two. Singing is just getting up there and holding the note. Whereas, when you sang, you're not just hitting the note, but an emotion too."

It will doubtless strike some as facile to suggest that CeCe Peniston's potential is as vast as the great canyon for which her adopted state is most famous. But one listen to *FINALLY*, the album, leaves little question that such is indeed the case.

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