

Aaron Neville *I Know I've Been Changed* BIOGRAPHY

*When the storm of life is raging Lord
Stand by me
When this old world is tossing me like a ship on a raging sea
Will thou, Mary's baby... Shelter in the time of storm...
Stand by me.*

-----Charles A. Tindley

In his opening notes on *I Know I've Been Changed*, the artist known to millions of devoted fans worldwide as Aaron Neville stands before the microphone not as a musical legend, but as an ordinary man appealing to an eternal God. His signature vibrato rises and dips in a musical prayer full of passion, utterly sincere.

It is perhaps the most powerful moment on a uniquely moving album---his first gospel recording since Hurricane Katrina ripped through the city he cherished, destroying his personal home, and forever altering so much of the life he knew. Despite that tragic backdrop, the project plays not as a mournful reflection, but rather as a hopeful celebration of the three things that have shaped Aaron Neville most of all---his hometown, his music and his faith.

In grand New Orleans style, *I Know I've Been Changed* celebrates Aaron Neville's 50th year in recorded music. The album brings the artist's career full circle, returning him to the music he loved first---gospel music---and reuniting him with Allen Toussaint, the legendary songwriter, musician and producer who produced Aaron's first recording session in 1960.

Toussaint, who grew up in a nearby New Orleans neighborhood and attended the same school as the Neville brothers, has been a frequent collaborator with Aaron over the years. "Aaron gives the song, the arts, the fullness of his heart and soul every time," Toussaint says. "He has always been that way. It's good to know that when something is that good, it's good forever---the velvet voice of Aaron Neville."

Producer Joe Henry and Neville recorded *I Know I've Been Changed* over a period of five days, using a stripped-down production approach to showcase the strength of the twelve handpicked songs, as well as the beauty of Neville's unmistakable vocals.

In true old-school fashion, the musicians played along with Neville's vocals in-studio to capture the feel of a live set. Arranging and recording such a large amount of material over such a short period, required masterful focus and teamwork. "When I go to the gym, I go to work out. When I go to church, I go to pray. When I go to the studio, I go to sing," Neville explains.

To handle the challenge of that level of performance, the producer assembled some of the top players. “I call them hard hitters at the bat,” Neville says. “With them playing, there weren’t too many mistakes.”

After four days of working on the instrumentation and lead vocals, Neville pulled together a group of singers who had worked with him on tour and in-studio for many years. They followed Aaron’s vibe, creating classic background arrangements to match the era in which most of the songs were originally recorded.

“It was like a labor of love for everybody. They loved all the songs and they put their all into it,” Neville explains. “It was a fun album, working with those guys.”

Over the past five decades, the indelible spirit of New Orleans has been synonymous with the musical dynasty known as the Neville Brothers. For Aaron Neville the solo artist, there is an equally intimate connection between his music and the faith that has sustained him for his entire life. Through challenge and tragedy, he’s managed to thrive, protecting both his heart and his voice. Ask him how and he says simply this: “He who sings once, prays twice.”

“My Momma, Amelia Landry Neville, always taught the golden rule to us---to treat others as we would like to be treated,” he shares. “One of her favorite sayings was this: ‘I’ll only pass this way once. Therefore any goodness or kindness I can show let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.’”

That perspective served him well in the months after Hurricane Katrina. “Right after the storm we’d go places to perform and run into displaced people from New Orleans everywhere,” Neville reflects. “So when we go sing we’re singing for them and letting them know they’re not by themselves. There’s hope.”

The spirit of New Orleans is marked by an undying hope. On this project Aaron Neville captures that spirit---reflecting the hope of his hometown, drawing hope from his faith, spreading hope through his music.