

JILL SCOTT
Biography

The question -- Who Is Jill Scott? -- has been- posed. The inquiry is considerable: Take your time.

After all, what do you make of a Philadelphia-born woman whose mother, upon first placing eyes on her daughter, envisioned an exclamation point behind her chosen name, thus: Jill!

What do you make of a woman who years ago recognized and named her altar ego Ami, without knowing it was I Am spelled backwards?

A decisive woman who respects talent but favors soul. What we do know of Jill Scott is that she carries her spine straight, confidence, high, spirit, risen and pure. Simply, Jill Scott — not to be confused with Gill Scott — is lifted.

Ah, but this answers more what than “Who Is Jill Scott?” It is an honestly erotic and animatedly sweet album, enigmatic unto the question itself. Speaking in the tongues of both poetry and song. Jill Scott’s timbre is refreshingly controlled yet exploring, restless and free! Her articulation is clear and patient, toying with space and time.

Featuring production talents DJ Jazzy Jeff, James Poyser and A Touch of Jazz Productions, as well as the writing of hers truly, “Who is Jill Scott?” seeks to establish a multifaceted artist with real, feeling stories to tell -- not just words on paper. Jill clarifies: “these words have soul, conviction and woman behind them.”

As such, because she can. Jill is releasing two singles, blessing the streets with the street single “Love Rain” featuring standout Rapper Mos Def, while radio receives the real Philadelphia soul single “Getting In The Way,” what Jill describes as a mature woman’s point of view when it comes to telling another woman to let her man go. “You know, like, look. Please don’t make me cut you,” Jill pleads low, “I’m praying here.”

There is a subtle, alive beauty to “*Who is Jill Scott?*” especially when she acts out her stories. “A Long Walk,” is the story how she and her fiancé Lyzel fell in love. It’s a slow, effortless, swing; one of Jill’s most revealing, effortless tracks. But it’s on the interlude, “I Think It’s Better,” that Jill is honoring the difficult, trying to tell a seasonal lover that she’s found her Lifetime.

“It’s so hard for me to say this / I’m strugglin’ to find the right word / .. What I felt is past tense / What I feel you just haven’t heard...”

And then, over a quiet piano, the song passes over to “He Loves Me” (Lyzel in E Flat), where she looks over to her Lifetime love and sings, patiently:

You love me / Especial/ ly different/ e ver y/ time/ you keep/ me/ on my feet/ hap pi ly/ excited/ by / your cologne/ your hands/ your smile/ your intelligence/ you woo me/ you court me/ you tease me/ you please me/ you school me/ give me some things to think about.

And as the song builds, so does Jill’s love. And it is fine.

Although inevitable -- and flattering -- are the comparisons from Betty Carter to Erykah Badu, it’s something to do with lazy, uncared-for cars. “Comparisons? I laugh at them,” Jill Scott says. “A really important part of my work is that everybody have their own power. We don’t follow like sheep. Every child has their own.” (Ami rising)

Jill Scott was raised and lives in north Philadelphia, the city that feels like a town and loves you back. The memory of her grandmother, Blue Babe, soft singing in the morning, sustains Jill. “She would take a five a.m. bath every morning and you would hear this real back porch hum...” from some deep throaty place,

Jill recollects “MMmm-hmmm. HmmMM,” the sound of cross-armed deacons and Mahalia Jackson. “We would gather at the door and listen.”

While Jazzy Jeff and Fresh Prince rocked Central High School parties and The Roots were street performers, Jill was reading poetry at the local art spot, October Gallery. Here, the crowds were growing and Jill was starting to hear things. “Sounds,” she says. “Sounds in the words. Eventually some parts would be spoken, some sung.” Roots drummer Amir (Brother Questlove) caught Jill’s performance and told producer Scott Storch.

The band invited Jill into the studio one night; she came and wrote in five minutes what would be the lyrics to “You Got Me.” Amir called Jill the next day to say the song would be their first single. The Track, which would be sung by Erykah Badu, went on to garner The Roots a 1999 Grammy Award for Best Rap Performance (Duo or Group).

Then and since, Jill Scott has toured with the Canadian cast of *Rent* as well as collaborated with The Roots, Eric Benet (with a remix of his track “When You Think Of Me”), Will Smith (“The Rain” from “Willennium”) and “Common” -- both on his album, “Like Water for Chocolate” and the single “8 Minutes to Sunrise” from the “Wild, Wild West” soundtrack.

In conjunction with Eastman Kodak, Jill sent junior high school students nationwide out on a simple, profound mission: Take pictures of what it is to try. (The students were inspired by the lyrics of her song with the same title).

As for the answer to the question, “*Who Is Jill Scott?*” well, ask Jill. “I don’t know how to call it. I can’t really put me in any parameters,” she says. “I didn’t want to be in anybody’s box. My hair’s not permed, I’m not skinny, I ain’t got a big ass: What we gone do with her? Well,” she says with bright discerning eyes “we can do this, this, this, this, this, this and this. How you like that?”