

Bonga's Beats - Romantic men

By [Bonga Percy Vilakazi](#)

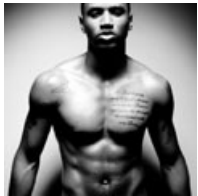
20 Nov 2009

No one does romance like men, and it gets even better when it's men with soul. This month, Bonga Percy Vilakazi looks at the latest releases from all the R&B/Soul singers, as well as our local soul-filled singers.



Ginuwine - "A Man's Thoughts" - Gallo Music

I'm ashamed to say that I had given up on Ginuwine. I felt that whatever he was doing was outdated and out of touch. But I was forced to swallow my words after listening to "A Man's Thoughts". After a disappointing "Back To The Basics", Ginuwine has made a comeback of note, if one can call it that. In the past, most of his songs were oriented around sex, but after he lost his parents, he seemed to change direction. He's now in his 30s, married and has gone through a lot. So I guess some things had to change. In this album, he still maintains his trademark sound, with more maturity and elegance. The sound is very current thanks to producers like Bryan-Michael Cox and Timbaland. Songs like Last Chance, Close the Door and Trouble remind us why Ginuwine became the king of seduction. One of the greatest tracks on this album is the unexpected duet with Brandy called Bridge to Love.



Trey Songz - "Ready" - Gallo Music

Trey Songz really surprised me with this album. This is his third release and I think he hasn't got the recognition he rightfully deserves. I have a feeling that things might change with this release because he's gone all out. His music is as matured. My only problem with him is that he pushes the sex image thing a bit too far, so that one ends up forgetting that he's actually a very talented vocalist. That said, this new album might be one of his best and he might even sell a few million copies, depending on which singles his record company decides to release. I couldn't help but notice that many of the songs have an R Kelly influence - from the sound to the actual phrasing, something I didn't mind at all. There is almost nothing negative to say about this album. Your Side of the Bed, Holla If You Need Me and Love Lost are just some of the songs that should earn Trey a Grammy nod.



Brian Temba - "Something Good" - Sheer Sound

I love this album for a number of reasons, first reason being that it has a bit of everything. Secondly, a lot of effort went into making the sleeve, something South Africans tend to overlook. Moving on. As much as this is Brian's debut album, he is not a newcomer in the industry. He's done it all. After spending some time in Joyous Celebration years ago, he headed to the UK where he starred as Simba in the stage production of The Lion King, and that meant hectic singing. There's no better place to polish one's skills than on stage. I first heard about Brian (I think) two years ago when a music-obsessed friend insisted I listen to his EP. I've been addicted ever since. Most of the songs are pop influenced, obviously a result of Brian spending all that time in London, which makes this CD special and unique. I would have loved to have heard more ballads though. Stand-out tracks include Dominoes, which has been playing on radio since its release, Don't Let Me Fall, Falling and the sombre and personal Better Then. It goes without saying that Brian has a lot to offer this industry and the versatility and quality in his music is outstanding.



Jeremih - "Jeremih" - Universal Music Group

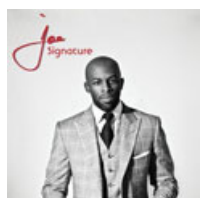
Jeremih is the latest addition to the prestigious Def Jam family. At only 21, it looks like the boy has a bright future ahead of him. With his worldwide hit Birthday Sex, things can only get better for this newcomer. What he knows about birthday sex is beyond me. To be quite honest, there is nothing major

to shout about in this CD. It's quite consistent and the songs have a nice flow. Being a newcomer, maybe it wasn't such a great idea to work with one producer throughout. I guess what matters is that he's got the attention of music lovers. So I'm going to look forward to his second release to see what he has to offer.



Donald - "Just Donald" - Will Of Steel

This is one CD I've been looking forward to for a very long time. After a number of false starts, the North West-born Donald finally released his debut CD under popular DJ Cleo's label, making him the first artist of his kind to release in a previously Kwaito and Hip Hop label. Before this, Donald honed his skills singing backing vocals for a number of local acts, such as: Malaika, Kwela Tebza, Zonke, and Selaelo Selota. Before that, he was in a group called Muzo. For someone as young as he, it was quite surprising to hear him singing this type of music, Afro Soul, instead of Afro Pop. The songs are well executed with live instruments throughout, showing off Donald's stunning voice. The album makes an interesting turn on track 11, Ngimtholile, which is without a doubt my favourite song. The song is very rock influenced, almost reminding me of Bonnie Tyler's Total Eclipse of the Heart or Air Supply's Making Love Out of Nothing At All, with a more soulful touch. Other songs that have been getting major attention are the ballad Know You Better, a definite winner, as well as Kea Ipotsa. On the other hand, solid as this album is - and Cleo doing an amazing job in producing - I would have liked to have seen Donald working with other producers and featuring one or two singers within a similar genre of his music.



Joe - "Signature" - Gallo Music

Joe has been in the music field for quite a while, pushing through as most of his peers fell away. So the fact that he's still around means that he's got something special. After being with a major label for many years, he decided to go indie and this is his second release from his independent label. Quite a romantic album and, of course, Joe is one person who knows all too well about baby-making music. One of the most noticeable things about this release is that Joe doesn't feature anyone: it's him all the way doing what he does best. His last few albums have been quite forgettable and I am almost certain that he's redeemed himself on this one. All the songs are solid and diverse, making Signature enjoyable. Of course, there are some killer ballads like Love's Greatest Episode and Miss My Baby. Marvin Gaye's Come Get To This is also a great cover - probably one of the best covers I've heard.



Will Downing - "Classique" - Universal Music Group

I've always felt that Will is one of the most underrated artists in soul music. Of course he has a great following, but his sales haven't matched up. But that's the story of a lot of soul singers. Not one to be troubled by industry politics, Will has always done good soul and R&B music, many people comparing him to the late Luther Vandross. His new CD, "Classique" reminded me of his 2003 release "Emotions". Both CDs have a similar vibe. Most of the songs (like I'm Gonna Love You A Little More Baby, Baby You're For Real) are cover songs, with a number of original recordings. This is a fairly good album from one of the ambassadors of romance.



Mario - "DNA" - Sony Music

Many might have thought that Mario was just a one-hit wonder until they heard his 2007 release "Go!", which in my opinion was his strongest work to date. From that day, he became one of my favourite male vocalists. But, unfortunately, as a result of many overexposed R&B stars, Mario has always been overshadowed and underrated. His latest album "DNA" doesn't disappoint at all, but I've heard better from him. Most of the tracks are mid-tempo and upbeat and his voice carries all the songs through, showcasing his vocal strength - not relying on the beat to carry him through. The stand-out track, which I'm hoping will take him right to the top of the charts, is his new single Thinking about You. The one great thing about this album is that it doesn't sound like anything that's currently out there.

ABOUT BONGA PERCY VILAKAZI

Bonga Percy Vilakazi is currently the Music Supervisor for the daily hit youth drama on etv, Rhythm City; where he is also one of the story liners. He is also a monthly contributor for Soul Magazine where he was the Senior Writer; and also frequently writes for True Love and Drum where he has interviewed a host of local and international celebrities including Tyler Perry, Toni Braxton, Deborah Cox, India Arie, Maxwell and Kenny Lattimore.

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