



Jonathan Butler *Close To You*

What the world needs now is love...but as is often the case, what the world needs begins with one person and one household. Thus, the crux of the story behind South African singer/guitarist **Jonathan Butler's** 23rd album, ***Close To You***, his tribute to the hallowed pop canon of **Burt Bacharach** (music) and **Hal David** (lyrics). The 11-song project features 10 Bacharach/David gemstones from the mid-60s to early 70s (including vocal versions of "The Look Of Love," "Walk On By," "I'll Never Fall In Love Again," "This Guy's In Love With You" and the lead single "What The World Needs Now Is Love," plus instrumental versions of "Do You Know The Way To San Jose" and "I Say A Little Prayer") as well as one original composition, the ebulliently autobiographical "Cape Town."

Following several monumental decades of moving from South Africa to America, building a worldwide audience for his music while also raising his children to adulthood, Jonathan Butler arrived at a crossroads in his marriage which ended in divorce.

A few years later Jonathan met violinist **Nadira Kimberly**, who brought profound new meaning to his life. Her presence by his side became the inspiration for ***Close To You***.

"Right then I realized this was not the season to write about me or my relationship," Butler shares. "It was a season for me to listen to what is in the atmosphere. The music of Burt Bacharach is what I was hearing. The next day I called my manager and told him I wanted to do a Bacharach songbook album and reinvent myself in the process. I am honored to become a student of this music. To recognize the precious, golden 'origin era' of great songwriting. I did my homework then sprinkled South African spice on top with my chanting and rhythmic approach to playing the guitar. *This is music I could really dig into.*"

The highlights of ***Close To You*** are bountiful, beginning with the title track that features the touching violin introduction of Nadira (*Hidden Figures*, *The Voice*). There is "A House Is Not A Home" which Butler sings solely to guitar/bass accompaniment – "a lyric I just felt I needed to pay attention to." Then there is the existential musing, "Alfie." "I had to reach a level of maturity to sing this one," he states. "The lyric is so profound. At the start, I am having a chat with the listener. Then at the end where it says, 'Without love, we just exist'...what a revelation! We all have many things to sort out in life but this is said in such a beautiful way. 'When you walk, let your heart lead the way / Then you'll find love any day.'"

Deepest of all is "What The World Needs Now Is Love," a message destined to ring out in today's troubled times as it did when introduced in 1965. "It's a 6/8 groove that keeps opening and opening, wrapping 'round the listener," he says. "People are ready to go to a higher place. At my concerts, I've seen them standing together, holding hands. Starting with me, I hope this song will start a new love movement." Reflecting upon his roots in poverty and apartheid in Cape Town, Butler adds, "What I am seeing today in America truly hurts my heart. I know what it is to see a 'whites only' sign. There are three things that are important for a Black man to know: Who you are; Where you are, and; When you speak, be bold, loud enough for everybody to hear. Many people that come to my concerts, I can see, are *still* conflicted. When I am among them, I am very open and real. I tell them *my story*."

Butler's musical story began at age 12 recording the Burt Bacharach song "Please Stay," originally recorded by vocal quartet The Drifters in 1961. Escaping then-Apartheid-poisoned South Africa through a love for music instilled within him from his parents and siblings, Butler has become a world-renowned singer, guitarist and entertainer via songs ranging from the pop of "Sarah, Sarah" and the soul of "Do You Love Me" to the jazz of "Deliverance" and his Contemporary Gospel classic "Be Encouraged." Now 56, Jonathan Butler has come back to Bacharach full circle with the music of **Close To You**. "I'd heard people use the term soulmate and always wondered, 'What is that?'" he concludes. "Now I have a buddy, lover and companion that I walk our dog Pete with, discussing our future plans in matrimony and philanthropy. It brings to mind a scripture I love which states, 'Blessed be the Lord who causes us to triumph in the end.'"

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