

# ENTERTAINMENT

## NE-YO

by Keisha Hill

*Editor-at-large*

With his upcoming sophomore album release set for May 1, R&B superstar Ne-Yo is revealing his growth as a songwriter, performer, and enhanced maturity. "I write from personal experience, so everything in my life becomes a part of my songs," Ne-Yo confesses. "In my opinion, the essence of a good song provokes thought while also making you feel some kind of emotion."

The man behind the mega hit "Unfaithful" for labelmate Rihanna and "Irreplaceable" for the chart-topping R&B darling Beyonce, is currently writing songs for Celine Dion, Whitney Houston and pop star Britney Spears. "I suppose growing-up around so many women must have given me some insight," says Ne-Yo. "I used to hear everything my mom, aunts and sisters would say about life and love. When I write songs for women, I pull from those learned experiences." In 2006 Ne-Yo had a big year in music, winning the prestigious Male

R&B/Hip-Hop Artist of the Year award at the Billboard Awards and received three Grammy nods for Male Artist of the Year, New Artist of the Year, and R&B/Hip-Hop Single of the Year



for his single "So Sick." The singer found himself in the midst of more praise as the premier single granted Ne-Yo access to more success in 2007. Ne-Yo received two more Grammy nominations for Best Male R&B Vocal Performance and Best Contemporary R&B Album.

The acclaimed songwriter says in awe, "I can remember being home a few years ago watching the award shows on television, just hoping that one day I could be there. Now, I'm not only there, but I've been nominated. Believe me, it's a good feeling."

Ne-Yo's latest

Stargate-produced track "Because of You" has found itself in heavy rotation on urban radio. The uptempo track was meant to pick up where "Sexy Love" stopped. "It's about being in love with a

person so much that it turns into an addiction. No matter how many times

you might break-up, you keep going back, because you just can't help yourself," he says.

Ne-Yo says he pours his heart into writing songs that his fans can relate to. On "Do You" the singer talks to his former love. "I wanted this song to sort of pick-up where 'So Sick' left off," he says. "My ex-girl is getting married, but still I'm writing her a letter telling her I care, while wondering, 'Do You?'"

Counting Prince as one of his inspirations, Ne-Yo pays homage to the megastar artist on the Scientist produced track, "Angel." Ne-Yo admits the song was one that he

had to ponder for a while. "The concept was what it would be like to be in a relationship with a real angel. Of course, it would be blissful, but no matter how much you love the angel she could never really be yours, because angels belong to God. Eventually, she'll have to go back to heaven," he says.

In the game of making consistent hits for both artists and himself, Ne-Yo's studio mantra is "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." A thought process that he hopes will offer him longevity.

"I'm not trying to make a song that is hot for the moment, I'm writing songs that I hope fifty years from now, people are still singing," the singers says

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