

## **Omar wheels in the big guns for his new album: Sing (If You Want It)**

13 May 2006 Deborah Gabriel

### **Long-time fan of Stevie Wonder**

*Sing (If You Want It)* out on Ether Records on May 15 will be Omar's sixth album to be released since his debut *There's Nothing Like This*, which made a major impact when it was released in 1990.

To have survived in the music industry for sixteen years is quite an achievement and bears testimony to Omar's talent and unique style which sets him apart from other musical talents.

In the last five years during which he took a break from recording, Omar built his own studio which he calls **Back A Yard** and set up his own recording label.

When Weekend Black Britain caught up with Omar he explained: "I set up my own recording studio because I needed some kind of independence and this was a means of getting it."

Omar makes no secret of the fact that music legend Stevie Wonder is a long time idol of his, so Weekend Black Britain was curious to know about how they linked up for his new album and produced *Feeling You* :

"My former manager introduced me to Stevie back in the day and he wanted to write something for me and eight years later he managed to come to the studio and we put something down."

Omar said it was a genuinely an impromptu visit where Stevie Wonder said he was in town and wanted to keep his promise! "It worked out brilliantly," he said. *Feeling You* is a superb track, which is typically upbeat in true Stevie Wonder style and has an excellent musical composition. Omar admitted it was his favourite track on the album: "The Stevie Wonder song is really special."

But listening to some of the others tracks on the album, notably *Be A Man* and *Kiss It Right* , Omar's appreciation of Stevie Wonder is evident, but rather than merely imitating his idol he uses the essence of Stevie Wonder's style to produce his own vibes, which is a real tribute to Stevie Wonder and a credit to himself.

### **Sell-out tours in the USA**

Overall the album has Omar's heavy bass stamp all over it, but this time the tunes are a lot funkier. Omar told Weekend Black Britain that the idea of the more funky vibes was: "*turning up the kick ...so if it was played in a club it would stand up against anything else that was played.*"

There are two tracks on the album that feature soul diva Angie Stone. Both of them are great tracks which are strong, base-heavy tunes, but *Stylin* just has the edge in the way the vocals are blended, complimenting the two distinct styles.

The other collaboration on the album is with rapper Estelle in *Lay it Down*, a message to

youths to stay away from gun crime. When Omar was asked how he came up with the tune he said:

“When I wake up with my lyrics I basically go after the melody and the melody tells me what to say. In that instance it was saying ‘lay it down’- what do you lay down? It was basically to lay down the guns – that’s how I came up with that.”

Aside from the fact that the tune carries a serious message, Estelle doesn’t disappoint and Omar aptly demonstrates his amazing vocal range, hitting the high notes with ease and injecting real feeling into the song.

Omar has toured America several times in the last few years, which has also kept him busy. Weekend Black Britain asked what sort of reception he gets in the USA:

“It’s been brilliant. I’ve toured America four times in the last four years and every time I go there my shows are always sold out, so it’s always good for me.”

Omar was asked how he managed to form alliances with so many different artists: “My music brings them to me and I’ve also met different people along the way when I’ve been travelling. I’ve just been lucky enough for them to be available while I was working on the album.”

Omar gives credit to his brother for the extra “kick and snare” to the album, who is much more involved in Omar’s music now and together they are building the new label and will be working with new artists and bringing on emerging talent.

Welcome back.