



Steven Digital 2

## KEYSHIA COLE

The R&B singer-songwriter learns the value of collaboration

KEYSHIA COLE IS IN HER MANHATTAN hotel room, high above the city's frenzied activity, talking about her fifth studio album, *Woman to Woman*. Myriad demands compete for her time—phones ring, her dog barks—but for now she's in a different head space, back in the studios in New York, Los

Angeles and Cleveland where she wrote and recorded most of the album's 15 tracks about love, trust and betrayal.

"We drank a lot of alcohol," the songstress remembers of the sessions, fueled by Louis XIII cognac and Don Julio tequila. "It's easier because I'm a thinker, and

when I think too much, I could be feeling something and not want to say it because of what people are going to think. When I drink, my emotions flow. So almost every night was a wild night—a debate night."

Although Cole has a solid, loving family life with her husband, NBA star Daniel Gibson, and their toddler son, she knows the album's content may place her in the crosshairs of tabloid gossips that ache to connect the songs to her personal life. She considers the scrutiny a small price to pay for reaching out to fans with such songs as "Enough of No Love" and "Can't Make U Love Me."

Cole had to change her writing and recording style to fully immerse herself in others' pain, and admits the process was emotionally taxing. For starters, she's not one to embrace collaboration with other songwriters or producers.

"I usually think, 'Just let me work. I don't need other writers or producers,'" she says. "This is the first time I sat down with writers in the studio, and it was a learning process. We'd sit there and say 'I feel this,' or 'I heard that.' If they were sharing something I'd never experienced, I was able to relate, to feel the pain." One song, "Trust and Believe," is about a woman who discovers her boyfriend and best friend are having an affair, something she's never experienced. "Still, I definitely feel if you've been hurt you can feel pain from others' relationships."

Cole hopes her fans can relate to her songs in the same way. "My husband and I have plenty of late-night talks, and I tell him how much my fans mean to me and how far I have come because of them. I want to return the favor, to be there for them, to let them know I understand their pain."

—Nancy Dunham

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