

# Black Music Month 2014: June 16 musical salute to Alicia Keys



Shamontiel Vaughn  
African American Entertainment Examiner  
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**It's Black Music Month. Enjoy the 2014 series. Support the artists. Buy their licensed music. And turn up as you dance along.**

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**Brief history:** In 2010, I wrote a music series honoring Black Music Month on Associated Content's site (republished on Examiner). The focus was to honor new R&B singers, veteran R&B singers, solo rappers, and evenly split the musical salute between female and male rappers. The only artists I was not willing to split up were Salt n' Pepa because they worked as a unit. In 2014, it's about time to salute

more artists, but in the spirit of Salt n' Pepa's legacy, R&B groups and rap groups will be included. The pattern in 2014 will be newer R&B singers (from 2000 to present), R&B and/or hip-hop groups, veteran R&B singers, and then solo rappers, still evenly split between women and men.

**Black Music Month Turn Up Factor "Turn down for what?":** From braids to shaved sides, Alicia Keys is a strikingly beautiful woman who doesn't seem to ever rely on her beauty to sell her music. She can dance but doesn't do it often. She's got a body men drool over, but she more often than not covers it up. She can hit all the high notes, but some of

her best songs are ones where she plays it cool. Alicia Keys is the epitome of "less is more," and it has guaranteed her a reputable and long career. And she's not afraid to step into the community to bring awareness (ex. Digital Death and Keep a Child Alive) or ruffle feathers (ex. performing in Israel). Even when gossip is shoved into her face, she is more likely to be silent and stay focused on business and family than to entertain tabloid fodder. Although music fans can sometimes treat celebrities like punching bags, it'd be next to impossible to hear her throwing cheap shots at other artists or being mean-spirited in general. She's a lady in every sense of the word and a warrior for causes she feels passionately about.

**My Connection/First Memory to Artist:** I am not a Prince fan nor will I ever be one, and I sure do piss Prince fans off when I mention that I loved Alicia Keys' version of "How Come You Don't Call Me" far more than the original. I was going through a really frustrating dating experience during my junior year of college when she released this song, and I played this song back to back to back. I'm more likely to write in a journal or read a book to get out of my own head, but every blue moon there's a song that snatches my thoughts right out of me. She did that with this one, and I did the same eye roll when everyone kept calling me but the person I wanted to talk to. So for that alone Alicia Keys gets my admiration and appreciation. I'm also a diehard fan of **Mos Def (Yasiin Bey)** so "You Don't Know My Name" and the almost-kissing scene made me even more of a fan of her work than I already was. Outside of that, I love that she is just as beautiful and entertaining with all of her clothes on as artists who feel like they have to come to the stage almost nude to sing a song. She's had her moments of showing off her silhouette, but even with a winter coat on, you can tell she's bad. But what's better is she's soulful, which makes her even badder. And even the very few times I've heard someone bash her, it just made me like her more. I recall a guy complaining about how annoying he found the chorus of "Unbreakable." I was neutral on the song before that day on the Red Line, but listening to him blab away and sing the lyrics made me go home, listen to the song and love it. This is probably why she'll never have beef in the R&B/soul industry -- anyone talking smack about her just makes people like me like her more.

**Numbers Don't Lie:** She came on the music scene instantly proving herself with a number one hit, "Fallin" (34 weeks). And that wasn't the only time she made it to the top 10 on the Billboard Top 100. Other songs that made these ranks include "A Woman's Worth" (20 weeks, peaked at number seven), "You Don't Know My Name" (20 weeks, peaked at number three), "If I Ain't Got You" (40 weeks, peaked at number four), "Diary" (28 weeks, peaked at number eight) and "No One" (39 weeks, peaked at number one).