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Black Music Month 2014: June 26 musical salute to Elle Varner



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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?": Even though her website **ElleVarner.com** gives users plenty to listen to, Gabrielle Serene Varner is a bit more guarded with her background. This may be the best way to keep her private life private and keep the focus on her music instead of her relationships (no matter how many videos and blogs report on a recent breakup). What fans do know is she's a graduate of the Clive Davis Department of Recorded Music, can play several instruments (guitar, flute, piano), and clearly jazz has influenced her music after studying at the Alexander Hamilton High School's Academy of Music's Vocal Jazz Group. Some artists are incredible regardless of being able to play instruments or have a resume to prove their sincerity, but there are very few who don't make it in some kind of way -- songwriting, bands, singers, production -- with all of this experience under their belts. In two years, it'd seem like a rush to place Elle Varner at the top of R&B and neosoul. But listening to "Perfectly Imperfect" makes it difficult not to.

My Connection/First Memory to Artist: I don't have any real-life connection to her music yet, but I will put in a full-fledged car performance every single time "Leaf" comes on. I adore everything about the song, especially the opening beat and the lyrics. I found out about this artist after hearing "Refill" repeatedly on the radio. The more it was on, the more it stuck in my head. I checked out her 2012 "Perfectly Imperfect" CD and was amazed by it. I don't skip past one song, but I have a hard time skipping past "Leaf." I think I listen to that song about 10 times every single time I hear the CD before I can move on to the funny "Oh What a Night" song. My mother thinks the latter song is absolutely hilarious and was one of two people who brought the lyrics to my attention. Got to love an artist who can bring humor and soul into one track.

Numbers Don't Lie: "Refill" has been her trademark song so far, spending five weeks on the Billboard Top 100. She made a longer lasting impression (26 weeks) on the Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Songs, with "Refill" peaking at number 10. "Only Wanna Give It to You" lasted for 21 weeks on the latter chart and peaked at number 20. Her 2012 album "Perfectly Imperfect" spent eight weeks on the Hot R&B Albums charts, peaking number 14.

For the first series of Black Music Month artists republished on Examiner (originally on Associated Content), [click here](#) to see all 30.

*Shamontiel is also **The Wire Examiner**, and for the gladiators, she's the **Scandal Examiner**, too.*