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Black Music Month 2014: June 6 musical salute to Fantasia



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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?": When a performer,

specifically a female performer, stops trying to be sexy and cute onstage and just lets the music take over her, that's when you see what she's made of. It happens when Tina Turner starts shaking those dresses. It happens when Beyonce goes into synchronized routines (even if all the other women are a reflection of herself). We saw it when Ciara first came on the scene and proved to be the only celebrity female competition for a phenomenal dancer like Chris Brown. And it happens when Fantasia goes on stage. She starts with freshly curled and combed haircuts, makeup, a dress and heels. By the time she's done performing, the heels are way on the other side of the stage. Her hair is dripping with sweat. And the makeup doesn't matter. She goes hard every single time she sings, from "American Idol" to now. It is a mystery to no one how she won season three of "American Idol." **Forbes** declared her as one of the top paid, talent-based artists, earning **\$1.5 million** for a mix of record label music sales and Broadway performances.

My Connection/First Memory to Artist: I started watching "The Voice" solely because I am a huge Usher fan. I lost interest in talent-based shows once they became scripted and a way to make fun of bad singers. "American Idol" originally was a great show to see raw talent, such as Ruben Studdard and Fantasia. And even when Fantasia, J-Hud and LaToya London made it to the bottom three, there was something interesting about how Fantasia was able to laugh it off. She's a trooper. And I respected that. When she won the competition, my own eyes teared up and I screamed like I knew her personally. I have only reacted like that to a handful of artists on any reality show. And seeing her live at the Taste of Chicago in 2008 was the same amount of excitement. It'd be impossible for her to disappoint a crowd. How could she? She's so much in a zone when she sings that even the grumpiest audience member would be forced into being impressed.

My favorite songs of hers that I never get tired of are "Truth Is," "Free Yourself" and "Not the Way That I Do," but I own all of her albums. For the length of her career, I will support her if I can.

Numbers Don't Lie: She's had quite a few hits, including "I Believe" (10 weeks on the Top 100 charts, peaked at number one), "Baby Momma" for 12 weeks (peaked at 60), "Truth Is" for 20 weeks (peaked at number 21), "Free Yourself" for 20 weeks (peaked at 41), "When I See U" for 23 weeks (peaked at number 32), "Bittersweet" for 12 weeks (peaked at number 74) and "Without Me" for two weeks (peaked at number 74).

For the first series of Black Music Month artists republished on Examiner (originally on