

A Tête-à-Tête with the Grammy-Nominated Artist: Eric Benét

Written by Kam Williams

Wednesday, 18 June 2014 23:52



Born in Milwaukee on October 15, 1966, two-time Grammy-nominee [Eric Benét](#) is an actor, singer and songwriter whose music has been influenced by such R&B greats as Al Green, Sly Stone, Chaka Kahn and Marvin Gaye. His first professional break came back in the late Eighties while he was in a local group called *Gerard*.

Since then, [Eric Benét](#) has struck gold on the R&B charts and released albums like "True to Myself", "A Day in the Life" and "Love and Life". He has collaborated with a range of highly respected artists, including *Something for the People*; *Earth, Wind, and Fire*; and

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Wynonna Judd. As an actor, he's enjoyed recurring roles on the TV series "For Your Love," "Half & Half" and "Kaya."

Here, he talks about starring opposite Erica Gluck in his new film, *Trinity Goodheart*, a heartwarming family drama about a strained father-daughter relationship. The movie premieres on the GMC-TV Network on Saturday, August 20th at 9 PM ET/PT (8 PM CT).

*The following interview was conducting during the summer of 2011. □ Since then, [Benét](#) plans to release a remixed version of his 2012 album *The One*, titled *The Other One*, which will be exclusive for his international fan-base. □ Benét is currently in the studio working on a new solo album set to be released next year, collaborating closely with R&B artists Calvin Richardson and Goapele. □*

Eric Benét, Day26 and Candice Glover will perform at Baldwin Hills Crenshaw on Saturday, June 21st at 3PM.

Kam Williams: Hi Eric [Benét], thanks for the time. How're you doing?

Eric Benét: I'm doing very well, thank you.

KW: I'll be mixing in my questions with a lot I got from fans. The first is from Teresa Emerson who says: I love your music, Eric [Benét]. Great to see you back in films. What interested you about this particular project?

EB: Well, my manager had read the script, and liked it a lot. And I finally got around to it after I was ambushed at a gig in Atlanta by the producers and the scriptwriter. They told me they felt I was perfect for the part. So, I took the initiative to read it that night and fell in love with it, because there were so many parallels between the main character's life and my own. I also liked how the story was so warm and about faith and how it reminded people that love and family are both worth fighting for.

KW: Felicia Haney says: This film has some similarities to your having been a single-dad with a young daughter in real life. Is that one of the reasons why you chose to do the

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film?

EB: I felt that if this was going to be my first male lead in a film, then it would be a great opportunity to latch onto since there were so many anchors in this character that I could sink my teeth into because of all the parallels with my life.

KW: Was that you really playing the sax in the movie?

EB: I did not actually play. I kind of just pantomimed, hoping that whoever really played the sax would sound good and coincide with what I was doing.



KW: Irene Smalls says: You play a black, single father raising his child alone. This is definitely not the norm in the Black community where there are so many single-female headed households. She asks: What message do you want to communicate through your

role?

EB: Irene [Small] is right, it's not the norm. But it was my reality. I was pretty much a single-father for most of my daughter India's life. She's 19 now, just finished her freshman year at USC, and she's blossomed into an incredibly talented, beautiful, strong young woman. Looking back, were there things I could've done better? Yes, but I'm still pretty proud of myself for having raised such an amazing individual. Being a parent is not easy, but speaking for myself, it's a wonderful blessing and the most rewarding job I've ever had.

KW: Teresa also asks: Will your daughter India be following you into the music business, and if so, how do you feel about it?

EB: India is an extremely talented singer/songwriter, and she is absolutely forging her own way musically. She's majoring in music business and communications, and she's been spending a lot of time in the studio while at school, so I think we're going to see a whole lot from India in the future.

KW: Marcia Evans asks: What parenting skills have you employed raising your beautiful daughter, India, to produce such a healthy offspring. Do you have any parenting tips to share with single fathers?

EB: I have always tried to keep an honest, age-appropriate line of communication open with India, even during the teen years, a painful time of development when they usually shut down, and the last person they want to speak to is a parent. But India would always tell me what was going on, so I really encourage people to be as open with your children as you possibly can.

KW: Marcia [Evans] goes on to say: The duets that you've done, like the one with Tamia, have been outstanding. So, she wants to know whether you've considered doing an entire album of duets, especially since love songs are what people are craving during these trying times.

EB: Hmm... That's a good idea, but I don't think I will ever do an entire duet album, because

the logistics and scheduling get tough. I will continue to do two or three duets per album. And I agree with Marcia that those kinds of very nurturing melodies and lyrics are needed more so than ever right now and I'm definitely going to do my part to make sure more of those songs are out there.

KW: Finally, Marcia [Evans] asks: How do you explain to India about real love, and how do you explain your songs with risqué lyrics to her?

EB: Hmm... as accurately as I possibly can. I explain that love's an elusive, fragile and resilient thing. And as far as the lyrics, I say that part of being an adult is being sexual, and when you're in a relationship, to express yourself that way is a beautiful thing.

KW: Harriet Pakula Teweles asks: Is there a recording artist you haven't worked with that you'd like to? And which of your recordings is your favorite?

EB: Every time I think about the first question, the answer generally turns out to be a living legend like Al Green, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder or Chaka Khan. I would love to record with any one of them, because they helped shape and mold who I am creatively. As to Harriet Teweles' second question, the answer changes with my mood. But right now, I'd have to say it's a song I wrote called "Sometimes I Cry," which audiences always really get into when I perform it at live shows.

KW: Larry Greenberg asks: When you played music producer T. Davis on the MTV series "Kaya", was that character based on anyone you know from the music industry?

EB: [Laughs out loud] Yes, I did base my character on a mosaic of a lot of the cocky, self-assured producers I'd worked with over the years. [Laughs some more]

KW: Legist/Editor Patricia Turnier [of www.megadiversities.com] asks: If you could back in time and speak to the Eric Benét of 1992, when your first album was released with the band called
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, what advice would you give to yourself?

EB: Oh, that's a great question! The #1 tip I would probably give myself is: "Enjoy every moment of this journey," because back then I would really get caught up in the details of "Why aren't we signed yet?" and "Why isn't this happening faster?" I would have to tell myself that there's always a reason why things happen. I've learned in my older age how to let it go when things don't work out, because something incredible that I don't know about yet is probably right around the corner.

KW: Patricia [Turnier] also asks: What is more challenging for you, singing or acting?

EB: Singing, for me, is like breathing air. Acting is a challenge. I find it difficult to switch gears emotionally.

KW: Lisa Loving says: There are probably a lot of struggling young artists who are working at UPS and trying to break through into the music industry at the same time, like you did. What advice do you have for them besides, "Lift with your back?"

EB: [Laughs out loud] I think the best advice I would give them is to always be working on your craft, because there are so many people out there with a dream similar to yours, a whole lot more than when I started.

KW: Lisa [Loving] also says: You have lived through some real tragedy in your life. How did you deal with the grief?

EB: The way I've tried to grieve is by not holding it in. You may mourn, cry, scream and purge whatever is going on inside you emotionally. That's part of the process. And keep those that love you very close as you go through it.

KW: Is there any question no one ever asks you, that you wish someone would?

EB: No, because one of the least enjoyable things for me to do is to talk about myself.

KW: The Tasha Smith question: Are you ever afraid?

EB: Yes.

KW: The Columbus Short question: Are you happy?

EB: Very happy!

KW: The Teri Emerson question: When was the last time you had a good laugh?

EB: I can't even remember what we were talking about, but I had a lot of family in town recently and we shared a deep, gut-wrenching laugh in the kitchen before I left for New York.

KW: What is your guiltiest pleasure?

EB: Reality-TV shows like "Hoarders".

KW: The bookworm Troy Johnson question: What was the last book you read?

EB: An old classic from Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer Series called "One Lonely Night." <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0451204255/ref=nosim/thslfofire-20>

KW: The music maven Heather Covington question: What are you listening to on your iPod?

EB: The last song I listened to is one I just wrote called “Real Love” which is going to be on my next record.

KW: When you look in the mirror, what do you see?

EB: Contentment.

KW: Thanks again for the time, Eric [Benét], and best of luck with both *Trinity Goodheart* and the upcoming album.

EB: Thanks, Kam.

Trinity Goodheart made its world premiere on the GMC-TV Network on Saturday, August 20th at 9 PM ET/PT (8 PM CT) with additional airings on Sunday, August 21st and Monday, August 22nd 2011 at 9 PM ET/PT (8 PM CT).

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Awards and nominations

Black Reel Awards:

2002, winner, Best Song "Love Don't Love Me" (*The Brothers*) 2012, nominee, Best Actor: Television Movie or Mini-Series (*Trinity Goodheart*)

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Grammy Awards:

2000, Nominee (Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group) "Spend My Life with You" (with Tamia) 2009, Nominee (Best R&B Male Performance) "You're the Only One" 2009, Nominee (Best R&B Album) "Love & Life" 2012, Nominee (Best Traditional R&B Performance) "Sometimes I Cry"

NAACP Image Awards:

1997, Nominee (Outstanding New Artists) "True To Myself"
2000, Nominee (Outstanding Male Artist) "A Day In The Life"
2000, Winner (Outstanding Song) "Spend My Life With You" - Songwriter: Eric Benet
2000, Nominee (Outstanding Album) "A Day In The Life"
2001, Nominee (Outstanding Male Artist) "When You Think of Me" (featuring Roy Ayers)
2001, Nominee (Outstanding Music Video) "When You Think of Me" (Directed by Prentice Smith)

Discography

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True to Myself 1996
A Day in the Life 1999
Better and Better 2001
Hurricane 2005
Love & Life 2008
Lost in Time 2010
The One 2012
From E to U: Volume 1 2014

About the author of this interview: Kam Williams is a syndicated film and book critic who writes for 100+ publications around the U.S., Europe, Asia, Africa, Canada, and the Caribbean. He is a member of the New York Film Critics Online, the NAACP Image Awards Nominating Committee, and Rotten Tomatoes. He is a contributor to TheLoop21.com, eurweb.com and so on. He is also a columnist for our webmag www.megadiversities.com.

One of his interviews made the cover of Heart and Soul magazine last fall. One of Kam Williams' interviews with Spike Lee is included in the 2002 book entitled Spike Lee: Interviews (Conversations with filmmakers). This book collects the best interviews of Lee. Some of Kam Williams' articles are translated into Chinese and Spanish. In 2008, he was Voted Most Outstanding Journalist of the Decade by the Disilgold Soul Literary Review. In addition, he has been honored at the U.N. (for BMORENEWS GLOBAL FORUM ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT) on June 15th 2012 by the Foundation for the Support of the United Nations (FSUN). Williams is an erudite Attorney who holds a BA in Black Studies from Cornell University, an MA in English from Brown University, an M.B.A. from The Wharton School, and a J.D. from Boston University. Kam Williams is a member of the Bar in NJ, NY, CT, PA, MA & US Supreme Court bars. He lives in Princeton, (New Jersey) with his wife and son. Kam Williams can be reached at kwilliams@megadiversities.com.