

By Karla D. Clark, special contributor



Monica: Still Standing

Up close and Personal with Grammy Award-Winning, Multi-Platinum Recording Artist Monica. She Talks about her New Show, Motherhood and Overcoming Trials

What happened to Monica? That has been the burning question in many young R&B fans minds for the last few years. The sassy young artist who topped the charts bringing us hip tunes such as “Don’t Take it Personal” and “The Boy is Mine”, a duet with Brandy, all of a sudden disappeared leaving a gap on the R&B scene.

Now, after dealing with the loss of loved ones, health issues and motherhood, Monica is back and stronger than ever. She has a new reality show on Black Entertainment Television (BET) called *Monica: Still Standing*, a fitting title given what she has been through. The original BET series which airs Tuesday nights at 10 p.m. gives viewers an intimate look into the singer’s everyday life.

Initially when the show’s executive producer James DuBose approached Monica with the idea of doing the “docu-drama”, she had reservations. “It was very scary stepping into the type of situation that would expose me and my life,” said Monica. “I thought about being judged and being under a microscope.” However, after some words of wisdom from her mom and working with DuBose on an hour-long “test” show that aired on Peachtree Television, Monica felt at ease. “I was able to see that James wanted to truly show my life and not put together something that was scripted or high drama,” Monica states.

**Photo courtesy of Black Entertainment Television*

A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Monica Denise Arnold made a splash into the music world as an R&B / pop singer and songwriter at just 15 years old. She became the youngest female artist ever to have two back-to-back No. 1 hits on Billboard’s R&B singles chart and later added acting to her list of accomplishments. Now at age 29, even with all of her success, Monica isn’t immune to trials and tribulations.

At age 18, Monica lost three people very close to her—including a cousin, her grandmother and her boyfriend at the time Jarvis Weems who committed suicide right in front of her. A few years later, her dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer. Although he miraculously made it through, Monica found the pressure of everything mounting up on her which eventually affected her own health and forced her to take some time off. “I needed to slow down. Everything that happened forced me to step back and take a look at who I wanted to be. My faith brought me through it all. I wish more people knew about the love of Christ,” said Monica. “In my family we don’t believe in getting stuck on the negative. We bond together and find the positive. That is the moral of my show. Our love and support for one another,” continues the superstar.

The title of Monica’s television show “Still Standing” is also the title of her much anticipated fifth album scheduled for release in December. Like the TV show, the album will mainly focus on Monica’s life and overcoming obstacles. There will also be a few finger snapping, head bobbing tunes as well featuring artists such as T-Pain (who Monica swears can actually sing!), Missy Elliot, Nayo and Stargate and Polow to name a few. When asked who she would like to work with that she hasn’t yet, Monica enthusiastically says Mary J. Blige, who has been a significant supporter professionally and personally.

Even with a busy career and all of life’s challenges, Monica is a loving mother of two young boys Romelo and Rodney. “My boys always come first. Before career, before anything,” said Monica. In addition to the show and album, the singer has a new clothing line coming out in 2010. Inspired by her sons, her Regions of Rock clothing line will feature hip styles for boys only.

As far as what the future holds, Monica says she has some more acting in her plans but right now she’s taking one day at a time. “I constantly pray about what God wants me to do. Right now, I feel the show is a way for me to help people who might have gone through similar trials,” Monica said.

**Karla D. Clark is a publicist and freelance writer.*