

LEGENDARY CHICAGO SOUL SINGER OTIS CLAY BUSIER THAN EVER WITH NEW CD *TRUTH IS* AND FEATURED PERFORMANCE IN ACCLAIMED DOCUMENTARY *TAKE ME TO THE RIVER*

Not many soul singers are hotter after nearly a half century of making records and headlining countless shows than in the early stages of their careers, but that's precisely the case with Otis Clay. The Chicago soul legend retains the supercharged gospel-powered pipes that he unleashed on his 1972 hit "Trying To Live My Life Without You" and countless more R&B classics, and he's busier than ever in the studio and on the road, bringing his fiery brand of soul to several generations of ardent fans.

Otis co-stars in director Martin Shore's new music documentary *Take Me To The River*, which showcases a passel of southern soul legends (including Bobby Rush, William Bell, and the late Bobby Bland) combining with a new generation of rappers to illustrate how the region's indigenous music has changed over the decades.

"It's really a lot of fun. Educational and entertaining, the whole works," says Clay, whose remake of "Trying To Live My Life Without You," filmed at Royal Recording Studios (where he cut the original hit with the late producer Willie Mitchell) was done in conjunction with pint-sized rapper P-Nut. "Lo and behold, I wind up with one of the greatest kids you're gonna find anywhere," marvels Otis.

Then there's Clay's new CD *Truth Is*, where the singer collaborates with a pair of old friends, producer/arranger Tom Tom Washington and songwriter Darryl Carter, in a veritable feast of warm, intimate old school soul. "The music has gone so offbase as we know it, that it was time to bring it back home. We wanted to talk about love instead of folks outsmarting each other," says Otis, who released the disc on his own Echo label.

Clay teams with fellow soul sender Johnny Rawls on *Soul Brothers*, a new disc of electrifying duets pressed up on the Catfood logo. It continues a musical relationship that commenced last year with three memorable guest appearances by Otis on Rawls' *Remembering O.V.* album. Clay contributes three vocal efforts to Chicago guitarist Dave Specter's Delmark CD *Message in Blue* (including a revival of his '67 classic "Got To Find A Way"), and he'll be prominent on Pittsburgh singer Billy Price's upcoming Duke Robillard-produced album as well.

"I'm bounding all over the place!" laughs Otis, whose sizzling rendition of "Got To Get Back (To My Baby)" was an exciting highlight of the Bo-Keys' 2011 album *Got To Get Back!*. As if all these new recordings weren't enough, an upcoming reissue compilation from the Secret Stash logo that digs deeply into the archives of Chicago's One-Derful! Records and includes several mid-'60s Clay performances, some of them, like the sparkling "Thank You Love," previously unheard.

Clearly Otis Clay's profile couldn't soar much higher than it is at the moment. He's lately been co-starring with Rush, Bell, Snoop Dogg, and a contingent of young rappers on a series of concerts in conjunction of *Take Me To The River*, the revue visiting destinations as varied as South by Southwest in Austin, Texas and Brooklyn Bowl in London. "What we're doing is kind of unusual, but this is an unusual movie," says Clay. Everywhere he goes, the reaction is overwhelmingly positive.

"The young people are seeing and hearing this music, and they're saying, 'Wow, we love it!'" says Otis. "Because now they know where it really came from."