

WILLY WASHINGTON--Biography

“I want people to *feel* something from my music. That’s why I make music.” Sitting in his East Village walk-up studio/apartment, chart topping hit maker/producer and singer/songwriter Willy Washington is finishing his morning bowl of fruit with his cat Marlo. (Whose name he borrowed as a *nomme de plume* for several of his biggest dance hits).

Willy started playing the trumpet at the age of 4, piano at 6 and then became his church organist at 15. “I learned early on that music was a way for people to release—to experience emotions and identify their feelings.” Honing his instrumental skills in church on Sundays and his dance sensibility in the local Gay nightclub scene on Fridays and Saturdays, Washington observed that music was a way to move emotional mountains and demolish cultural barriers.

“I remember the first time I walked into the Paradise Garage in New York. It blew my mind—there were straight people, gay people, black people and white people all getting down.” With that Washington was born again. He moved to NYC, graduating shortly thereafter with a degree and the title of “Recording Engineer.”

He began to articulate what would become his signature blend of quirky “electro-soul euro dance-pop” hanging out and learning dance music production from house legends Kerri Chandler and Tony Humphries. “I wanted to be the Quincy Jones of dance music—big strings, big horns big production on a small budget. I did the best I could with what I had.” Washington’s brown eyes are starting to glow.

His first big dance hit “*Trouble*” was a happy accident, written with Joi Cardwell in 2 hours based on a drum track he had lying around his Brooklyn apartment. The song was released on 8-Ball Records and became the biggest record the label ever released garnering remixes from House icon Junior Vasquez, Deep Dish and many more. Washington’s follow-up single “*You got to pray*” shot to #1 on the Billboard Dance Charts and received international acclaim. A star was born.

“*Ain’t no runnin’ away*” Willy’s debut track for UK label Esterio Records was yet another dance floor bombshell. It was licensed extensively leading to a six single run for Esterio and establishing him as a Top Line writing Leviathan.

More important than the success of his tracks, Willy discovered that his greatest gift was not his ability to simply write and produce world-class dance hits—his real talent was in his ability to work with singers to draw out performances that even they didn’t know they had in them.

What separates Willy Washington from the herd of great producers and writers is his unique ability to separate his head from his soul and use the latter to drive his creative process. “Most singers come into the studio with *their* thing—you know, their little vocal tricks that everybody knows. I have a singer come in and I always tune in to one part of

their voice—a part they are not often aware that they have, and that is what I like to work with.” He is emphasizing every other word with a solid rap of his knuckles on the table like a conductor.

Willy’s proprietary approach to mining for creative diamonds extends to his Top Line writing as well. “When I write Top Line I don’t listen to the track immediately. I take my time and then I let the music speak to me. I go in to record, the mic is on and the first thing that pops into my head when I hear the track is what goes down. That way my head doesn’t get in the way.”

Washington’s track record as a world class hit maker makes him an obvious choice for labels and artists looking for the next ass shaking feel good hit of the year, but it’s easy to miss the finer point of his gift—the subtle secret to his success. At the center of every artist is a motivation. Willy finds the soul of that motivation in a way that sets him apart as a Master Craftsman. Pushing his empty bowl away and stretching out his arms, he smiles matter-of-factly.

“I push singers, and I bring out things in singers that they never knew they had. I take singers to places they’ve never been. I pull things out of singers that they never knew were there . . . effortlessly.”