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MAREE MCRAE: It hasn't been a breeze



Meet Maree McRae- singer, songwriter, and best of all, a loving mother.

After working as lead singer and multi-instrumentalist for one of the Rocky Mountain region's most sought after acts Cadillac Ranch, Maree McRae took a solo creative venture and released her successful debut project "I Won't Settle for Less." The album gave her the recognition she deserved as a remarkable singer/songwriter and her debut album quickly made its mark on the reputable National Gavin's Top 40 Americana Radio Chart, gaining her acclaim and top awards as an insightful and melodic artist. Due to all of her newfound success, McRae was approached with an offer to go on the road and tour. It was then that she had to make a big career decision.

After many heart wrenching years of continual infections, McRae's son Stephen was diagnosed with CVID. CVID is a disease that affects the immune system, making it hard for one's body to fight off infections. McRae was faced with the harsh reality that she could not leave her son, nor could she bring him on the road with her when he was ill. She knew in her heart that she needed to take a break from her music career to stay home with her son. Although after all the recognition she had received, it was a tough decision to make, McRae says now, she does not regret it one bit. Going through the illness together with her son has only strengthened their bond. Her son's illness has put life into perspective for her and she is able to enjoy every moment she has with her friends, family, and her music.

What's great is that after some time, McRae was able to get back in the studio, to work on her highly anticipated sophomore release, "Urgency," after multi-platinum producer, Wyatt Easterling (head of A&R for Atlantic Records) heard McRae's new writing, and offered her the opportunity to record in Nashville with triple Grammy award-winning engineer, Mark Capps. Her new album's 12 original tracks maintain the truthful resonance that echoes a variety of styles from Americana/Folk Pop to Adult Contemporary. McRae self-composed all tracks, and the album is filled with her

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trademark, memorable melodies and lyrics from the soul. “Urgency” is her most intimate work yet, with the title cut examining the preciousness of each moment in life and the poignant universal theme of immortality. This soulful collection of work holds McRae’s heartfelt voice front and center. Because of the poignant universal message she creates in this feature song and title cut, “Urgency,” McRae was offered and accepted the role of International Music Ambassador for the Colon Cancer Awareness Foundation. Now, McRae has come back to share her beautiful talent with the world once again and we got the chance to interview her!

Women’s Online Magazine: *Tell us about the journey you have faced between the success of your music career and the pain of your son’s illness.*

Maree McRae: I remember in the middle of the release of my first album, “I Won’t Settle For Less” I got the cover story for Performance Magazine. That was a biggie at the time. We were playing the Crossroads Showcase in Memphis, and I was touring to the World Music Fest in Sweden...everything felt right on track with my music. Although it was a bit helter skelter at home for my son was having so many infections. Then I remember sitting in Paul Mascioli’s in Nashville, he was telling me how he loved my music and would love to sign me, but my commitment had to be to tour and perform at least 9 months out of the year. I remember crying thinking, “I have a sick child, how can I possibly tour?”

I knew at that moment, I had a choice to make. One part of me was extremely sad that my music wouldn’t get the exposure it deserved, another part, the bigger part, knew my priority would be to stay with my son. It really was an easy decision. It doesn’t mean we didn’t grieve though, for really the WHOLE situation. I knew I had to walk away from a dream, but I had my heart and time to give to my son.

WOM: *How has the experience made you stronger?*

MM: I have grown stronger because I HAD to. I mean, you either sink or swim. You make a decision every day for hope or gloom.

WOM: *Tell us more about your single (and album name) URGENCY.*

MM: The day my son was finally diagnosed, about 2 years ago, I wrote “Urgency” walking out of Natl. Jewish Hospital. It was that overwhelming sense, as I stated in my album liner notes, that there was no time to wait...that truly, the minute timer was ticking away. “It could be you, it could be me next, but what a gift it is to finally know how to spend our days.”

WOM: *How do you put your emotions into your lyrics?*

MM: I don’t have to “try” to put my feelings into lyrics. I believe they are born of the soul. We all have that in us, as a songwriter, my soul just speaks loudly and clearly more easily than for others. It truly pours out when it has something to say.

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WOM: *How has being a musician helped you deal with life's challenges?*

MM: This question merges with the last one. Because I can put my emotions into words, writing music is so healing and because I share this with others who can benefit, it's been very therapeutic. I remember even as a little kid, I'd go sit on the piano stool and pluck away at the keys and totally disappear from this world. So I would say music is a total release for me.

WOM: *Are there any other standout tracks on the new album that are extremely emotional and special to you?*

MM: The question of whether there are standout tracks that are special to me is a tough one; nearly every track is special on this album. People email me daily telling me how a song has changed their life. Do It for Love, Speak your Mind, Urgency, Let Go, these are all the deeper songs, but I don't think I have much "fluff" on this album anyways. Every song is a song that I am really proud of. Maybe "It's a Shame" is more of the easy going fun one, and even "Until I Met You" The last song "Who Knows" of course, is very dear to my heart and it is still hard to get through it sometimes. It was the first song that we mixed, and I had left the studio to get something to eat with my dear friend in Nashville. When we came back they were mixing "Who Knows" on this 100K system, just my voice, my keyboard and the beautiful cello. The sounds were so gorgeous, but on top of that, it being a song for my sick child...that was tough. I had Stephen's picture with me in the vocal booth cutting it, and had to keep telling my engineer to give me extra time to get through this one! I wrote the song on the way out to Nashville to record on the plane. It is about illness, it's about doing anything to change it for our loved ones, to want to put ourselves where they are so they don't suffer, BUT I really didn't want it to be a bummer song. The last line, "and I pray, I just pray, that somehow someday you will finally GET better someday" was how it first was written. The words "GET BETTER" were changed to "FEEL BETTER"...I knew that was a good change, who wouldn't want someone to feel better? I knew then if my son, Stephen, heard it he wouldn't think he wasn't perfect and okay just as he is, but just that I always hoped that he would just FEEL better. Does that make sense? Probably to the writer! But hoping I get that message across alright.

"Urgency" is available via CD Baby online and McRae's successful single "Breeze" can be heard on the radio.

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