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JAZZ

## Taylor-made to celebrate love

**From mushy amour to spiritual bonds, Dione Taylor sings from her heart**

December 14, 2006

**ASHANTE INFANTRY**  
ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER  
Toronto Star

Dione Taylor's got a love thing going on — a new album dedicated entirely to the vagaries of amour.

"I thought it was an important message to have right now," explained the vivacious soul-jazz singer over tea at an Annex café.

"The universal language of love is music and this is my gift to the world."

But she's taken some ribbing over the disc's saccharine title track, "I Love Being Here With You," a plodding duet with Denzal Sinclair that she penned.

"People say it's so mushy. I'm like, 'Have you ever been in love? What does being in love feel like?' It's mushy, it's gooeey, and you feel like you don't know where you're going."

The record's offerings are not all of the romantic variety. There's "Little Black Dress," which promotes self-love and, not surprisingly from the daughter of a Pentecostal minister, the transcendent "I'll Be There."

"I wrote that when I was going through a really rough time ... I was seeking some sort of spiritual help and those words came to me: *When you're down and lonely/And you feel like the world is crumbling/Always remember: I will be there.*

### Falling in love sends jazz singer straight to the kitchen

"That meant a lot to me, to know that someone was watching over me, looking out for me. It's open to interpretation, but for me it's a spiritual song."

Taylor contributed four songs to her sophomore album; the rest are standards such as Cole Porter's "Just One of Those Things," and a pop cover — Prince's "Nothing Compares 2 U."

And top-rated locals, such as guitarist Jake Langley, trumpeter Guido Basso and pianist Doug Riley, accompany her on the high-energy disc.

"I really wanted to capture the live essence of music — create that excitement in voice and players. Everything sounds overproduced today, even in jazz sometimes."

Raised in a family of singers and instrumentalists, by age 10 Taylor was musical director and



Soul-jazz vocalist Dione Taylor examines different kinds of love, from romantic to religious on her new disc, *I Love Being Here With You*.

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organist of their church. Introduced to jazz by a high-school teacher, she graduated with honours from Humber College's renowned jazz program and immediately embarked on a professional career.

Now, at age 29, she's a Juno nominee (for her 2004 debut CD *Open Your Eyes*) who has performed for President George W. Bush and Queen Elizabeth II.

She's also quelled relatives' anxieties about utilizing her rich, smoky vocals for secular purposes. "It's not an issue anymore. I'm an adult now. To me, singing and music is spiritual. It's all an extension of me and who I am and how I express myself.

"My family was concerned because I wasn't singing gospel. They have their convictions and I love them."

Since her parents won't venture into nightclubs, they only saw their eldest perform for the first time last year at an arena during Saskatchewan's Centennial celebrations.

They'd probably appreciate her gig tomorrow as guest vocalist with The Nathaniel Dett Chorale.

In addition to selections from *I Love Being Here With You*, Taylor will join the Chorale on seasonal pieces, including "O Holy Night."

The songstress still hasn't finalized her holiday plans, but plans to be in good company.

"I might be on an island somewhere (with her beau) or home in Regina with my family. It's not about where you are, but who you're with.

"Dinner in Regina is always at my (paternal) uncle's. We're talking about 40 people around the dinner table. Lots and lots of laughter, lots of talking and way too much food.

"Afterwards, the kids play Monopoly and the adults play Scrabble. The joke is which father will fall asleep first on the couch. I get teased about being the glamorous cousin — the `she thinks she's too big for Regina' cousin.

"But it's all love."

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