

Jalen Ngonda is one of the most captivating performers on today's soul scene. His voice, equal parts raw feeling and elegance, exudes confidence and charm. At 28, his resume reads more like that of a seasoned veteran: He has performed at New York City's Summer Stage Festival, Picktathon, Newport Folk Festival, opened for Laura Mvula and Lauryn Hill at the Montreal Jazz Festival and sold-out houses on his own in Germany, the UK and Switzerland. Most recently, Jalen thrilled audiences and garnered rave reviews with his powerful solo performance in support of Thee Sacred Souls' US tour. Now with a pair of widely revered singles under his belt at his new home, Daptone Records, Jalen prepares for the release of his debut LP, *Come Around and Love Me*.

Jalen Ngonda grew up in a music loving family on the outskirts of Washington D.C. He began musical studies in grade school, where he dabbled in violin, ultimately moving on to the guitar and piano. His inspiration came from listening to his father's collection of Motown CDs (The Temptations, Mary Wells, and Smokey Robinson and the Miracles), which opened his eyes to the vastness of American music, guiding him along a path of constant study and discovery—from early blues, to gospel to jazz to rock & soul.

Like many of the legends before him, Jalen cut his teeth in the church where he played organ, honing his craft to the organic pulse of soul-grooving parishioners. And it was this very church that helped raise the money to send Jalen to the Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts, where he honed his rich, nuanced voice and sublime falsetto.

Some years later, after a serendipitous, last minute opening slot for Jools Holland—attended by Daptone Co-Founder, Neal Sugarman—the pair hit it off and plans for an album on Daptone were struck. Unfortunately, this happened to be a month before the COVID 19 pandemic shut down the world. Notwithstanding, Jalen eventually made it to Hive Mind Studios in Brooklyn, NY where he began writing and recording with the help of producer/arrangers Mike Buckley and Vincent Chiarito (both members of Charles Bradley's Extraordinaires) and a crack team of a-list musicians from the Daptone family. The team skillfully blends heavy arrangements and introspective lyrics with motown sophistication, leaving the listener in a blissful wash of wonderment—culminating in quite possibly one of the finest soul albums of the decade.

Jalen has been writing songs since he was 14, and his compositions are also very much of these times. He explains, "I love music from the 20th century— I listen to it all the time, but I'm in this world and the 21st century. ...to a stranger, I'd describe my music as modern soul and R&B, while trying to fit in the Beach Boys and the Beatles somewhere in between." *Come Around and Love Me* reveals how he creates a classic approach that is rooted in the sounds of revered pioneers, without falling into imitation—leaving no doubt that Jalen will continue to shine within the superlative, timeless musical tradition that is Daptone's hallmark.