

PRESS & REVIEWS



DK Ibomeka

The Recorder & Times (Brockville): May 2009

Ella CD started Ibomeka on road to career in jazz

By Ronald Zajac

It's hard not to believe that Providence was at work when DK Ibomeka discovered that jazz was his calling.

The London, Ont.-born singer, who performs at the Brockville Arts Centre Friday night as part of the Thousand Islands Jazz Festival, was set on studying medicine at McMaster University when he moved into an apartment in Hamilton.

"Someone had left an Ella Fitzgerald CD behind," Ibomeka, 28, recalled in an interview Tuesday in the arts centre lobby.

"When I heard that, I just went crazy. I just couldn't believe how beautiful her voice was."

Ibomeka (that's pronounced "ee-bo-MECK-ah") began devoting himself to singing, at the expense of his medical studies, until eventually launching on a full-time singing career.

In fact, he recalls, he sold his parents on this bold move by auditioning for them in their kitchen.

Since then, he put out a debut CD, *Love Stories*, in 2006, followed by a two-year tour that took him across Canada and off to Europe. (He is just back from a show in front of 30,000 people at a jazz festival in Hanover, Germany last week.)

His new album, *I'm Your Man*, comes out later this month, a collection of covers of jazz standards such as "God Bless the Child," "Our Love is Here to Stay" and "The Very Thought of You."

Ibomeka, although an imposing figure at six-foot-seven, is soft-spoken and has a gentle voice well-suited to these timeworn ballads.

The old standards paint a picture of love in which the speaker is both honest and vulnerable, said Ibomeka.

"I love what you can do with the space and the time," he said. "You just have so much space to play."

Guelph Mercury: June 12, 2008

I'm Your Man Review

by Robert Reid

London, Ont.-bred DK Ibomeka is the size of a football lineman. But, as he demonstrated when he opened for Colin James at Centre in the Square in early 2007, he's a big man with a big, rich, bottom-of-the-barrel voice including a big, three-octave range.

Following on the heels of his 2006 debut release *Love Stories*, *I'm Your Man* features soulful renditions of such jazz standards as *Our Love is Here to Stay*, *These Foolish Things* and *I Get Along Without You Very Well*, along with jazz readings of *God Bless This Child*, *I Put a Spell On You* and, yes, Leonard Cohen's *I'm Your Man*.

George Koller, who handles bass, has assembled Ibomeka a stellar lineup of musicians including guest artist Pee Wee Ellis, Van Morrison's longtime band leader.

The son of Nigerian immigrants, Ibomeka is well on his way to the front ranks of Canadian jazz.

He appears July 11 at the 16th annual Uptown Waterloo Jazz Festival.

Toronto Jazz Magazine: June 2008

I'm Your Man Review

by Dave Milbourne

Well it seems that DK has moved forward in “leaps and bounds” since I first met him over two years ago. At that time he was searching for direction, and I remember telling him “sing songs you really feel for, because your best will always come through”. Needless to say his voice had all the right attributes, power and a superb octave range. Fortunately he got the right management, Wychwood Park Productions which has led him to the heights he is now at.

Over the last couple of years he has toured Europe four times, and even appeared in Ronnie Scott's famous club in London, England. DK has also performed in most major jazz festivals and clubs across Canada. His first CD., *LOVE STORIES*, received complimentary reviews when it was released in 2006, although I'm betting his most recent recording, *I'M YOUR MAN* will get far more attention. I'm a “glutton” for standards and this CD has plenty, it also demonstrates DK's ability to handle some of these lovely old “chestnuts”. Not to forget the top-notch musicians he has backing him, Michael Shand, keyboards; George Koller, bass; Kelly Jefferson, sax; Davide DiRenzo, percussion; and special guest, saxophonist, Pee Wee Ellis longtime band leader for Van Morrison, and member of the legendary, James Brown hot horn section. Other guest musicians are, Mark McLean, drums; Annie Whitehead, trombone; Geoff Young, guitar; Marc Rogers, bass; and vocalist, Chris Rouse. Catch, DK Ibomeka when you can, you can't miss him.....

Toronto Life Magazine: February 2007

DK Ibomeka Review

by Jason Anderson

DK Ibomeka's plans to go to medical school were postponed after he listened to an Ella Fitzgerald CD left in his apartment by the previous tenant. His love of the First Lady of Song's voice led him to discover his own. A fast-rising product of Humber's jazz program, the Nigerian-Canadian singer displays a rich, supple vocal style on his debut disc, *Love Stories* (2005), an impressive set of originals and covers—including the Beatles' R&B vamp "Oh! Darling"

Food & Drink Magazine: Winter 2007

Love Stories CD review

If you have any serious romance planned for Valentine's day, this disc is your guarantee of success. DK Ibomeka's soulful jazz mixed with a touch of the blues is utterly beguiling, whether he's singing his own material (co-written with producer Haydain Neale of Jacksoul), Nina Simone's classic "Sugar In My Bowl," or the Beatles' "Oh! Darling." After honing his warm baritone and winning delivery at local clubs, the Toronto-based singer has developed into a performer with true star potential.

Hi-Fi News (UK) February 2007 www.hifinews.co.uk

Love Stories CD review

Blending older styles of jazz-tinged soul and R'n'B, smooth-voiced yet gutsy singer Ibomeka might have called this 'seduction songs', but as well as his own compositions in that vein there are covers of Lennon/McCartney's 'Oh! Darling' and Nina Simone's 'Sugar in My Bowl'. It's a recipe that's certainly sweet enough.
Performance: 4 (out of 5) **SH**

GetReadyToRock.com (UK) August 2007

Live Review: Ronnie Scott's, London 31 July 2007

by Pete Feenstra

This is a good time to be DK Ibomeka. With a vocal range that can effortlessly switch from baritone to near falsetto at the turn of a phrase, and with an easy going stage manner, and a live set that fluidly shifts from the languid to the up-tempo, taking in blues, funk, and soul through to jazzy inflected standards, DK is a vocalist for all seasons. Throw in a couple of light hearted self penned relationship narratives from his debut 'Love Stories' CD, and it is readily apparent that DK is ideally positioned to slip into a post Lou Rawls role as an expressive interpreter of song, while keeping his stylistic options open.

Born in Nigeria, and hailing from Canada with a road tested band admirably marshalled by the keyboard playing Michael Shand, DK made the most of a surprise entrance. While all eyes were focussed on the band playing a gentle intro to Ray Charles's 'I Believe to My Soul' DK emerged from the shadows, at the back of the room to fill the Ronnie Scott's with the deepest timbre imaginable.

Looking like a slightly taller version of the boxer Lennox Lewis - complete with dreads and oversized suit, DK quickly established his stage presence before taking us on a journey of vocal pyrotechnics that took in covers of Nina Simone, Joe Williams, Screaming Jay Hawkins and Ray Charles with whom he opened and closed an engaging one hour set. DK also showed he is a growing song-writer with a talent for both humorous and wistful lyrics, as evidenced by two self penned songs from the album, the jocular 'I'll Be Anybody', and the rueful reflections of the shuffle 'So Long'.

In between times, DK impressed the early evening crowd with his willingness to fill the room with a series of extended vowels with which he occasionally emulated Al Jarreau, as well as some effortless vocal swoops as part of a couple of deep toned ballads and even some jazzy scat singing. He dug deep for an unlikely but wholly convincing adaptation of Lennon & McCartney's 'Oh! Darling', transforming the tough rocker into a very slow blues complete with a call and response vocal section with the enthusiastic crowd.

But as if to emphasize his vocal confidence, he name checked Johnny Hartman before slipping into the first of a handful of voice and piano duets explorations, on the very deliberately enunciated 'Dedicated To You'. It was in the middle of this smooth ballad that DK breathlessly held a note and extending his arm in a sweep around the room, while simultaneously retracting the mike as if to let the note hang in the air.

DK also demonstrated his ability to pair together two radically different takes on the blues, digging deep for Nina Simon's smouldering 'Sugar in My Bowl', and upping the tempo for a fairly accurate reading of Joe Williams' version of Memphis Slim's 'Everyday I Have the Blues'. Guitarist Mark Patterson finally came to terms with his small amp set up to deliver some telling notes before DK rounded things off with some accomplished scat singing.

As with many crossover vocalists, DK sometimes teetered on the brink of that ill defined divide between jazz, blues and soul on the one hand, and cabaret on the other, but with a voice like his and the sheer delight he displays when achieving several moments of extraordinary vocal excellence, that is a small stylistic price to pay.

And while he may have ditched the demons of Screamin' Jay Hawkins on 'I Put a Spell On You' he grimaced, gesticulated, and once again momentarily eschewed the mike to, wring every last drop of emotion from the song in the style of Nina Simone.

DK and his band seemed genuinely delighted by the rousing reception at the end of the set and added a gospel style outro on top of another brief but excellent electric piano embellishment from Michael Shand.

DK Ibomeka is big man with a god given talent and it merely remains to be seen in which context he will be persuaded to use his magnificent vocal prowess in the future.

The Mississauga News: Feb 14, 2007

A funny thing happened on the way to med school

Jazz singer plays the LAC this weekend

by John Stewart

It's hard to keep up with the good news for DK Ibomeka (pronounced ee-bo-MECK-eh) these days. While chatting with The News about his show this Saturday at the Living Arts Centre (LAC), the singer receives word that he has been nominated for best male vocal performer in the National Jazz Awards.

That comes on the heels of a similar nomination for the National Smooth Jazz Awards, at the LAC this April. Ibomeka, born and raised in London, Ont., is on his first headline tour and, before that, was a big hit as an opener for Canadian rhythm and blues king Colin James.

Ever since his first CD, Love Songs, came out last summer, acclaim has been chasing the 26-year-old, through a European tour where he earned three and four encores from notoriously tough German audiences and now on his tour of Canadian cities.

Love Songs, produced by Haydain Neale of Jacksoul, is a mixed bag of blues, jazz, pop, rhythm and blues and in-between genres, that features mostly Ibomeka originals.

It began as a traditional jazz standards album before the 6-foot-7 vocalist started sharing his old box of poems with Neale. They co-wrote several tunes based on the poems. Most, like The Interview, focus on the pitfalls of love matches. "For me, those songs about the trials and tribulations of dating are my love stories," laughs the singer.

He was actually headed for medical school until one day when he had just moved into a new apartment in Hamilton and put on an old Ella Fitzgerald album.

"I had heard her name, but it was a matter of hearing her sing. That was it when I heard her voice echoing off those empty walls." Ibomeka was a student in the jazz vocal program at Humber College when teacher and jazz vocalist Trish Colter convinced him he had to sing the Sammy Cahn ballad, Dedicated To You, made famous on a seminal recording by Johnny Hartman and John Coltrane in 1963. It went over so well at a school concert that the staff started calling DK, "Mr. Hartman." He didn't finish the course because his career took off so quickly.

Dedicated to You is on the album, in an effective guitar and voice duet. It made No. 6 on the December playlist of MOJO Magazine in England.

Saturday's audience can expect "a lot of energy and a lot of power" in a range of styles, says the singer, who opened at the LAC last fall for The Temptations.

"For me, the performance is the most important part," he says. "It's the idea of being the messenger of the lyric and being up there to really tell the story."

The Record (Kitchener, Cambridge And Waterloo): **February 8, 2007**

DK Ibomeka review in the Record (opening slot for Colin James' Little Big Band) taken from:

Little band, big sound; Colin James electrifies Centre with his high-octane tribute to jump blues, R&B

By: Robert Reid

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The stage was set for (Colin) James by the London, Ont.-bred DK Ibomeka.

Haven't heard of him? Don't worry, you will.

The son of Nigerian immigrants, he's a big man -- football lineman big. And he has a big voice that bridges blues, jazz, soul and pop.

He performed six songs from his debut album, *Love Stories*, including an original he co-wrote with Jacksoul's Haydain Neale.

He and his four-piece band were enthusiastically received. I, for one, would have been content to hear a whole concert.

Ibomeka has three-octave range, but it's the deep, rich, bottom-of-the-barrel, smokey rumble that seeps through your pores into your musical soul.

Whether covering The Beatles, Ray Charles or Nina Simone, he makes the songs his own. The Beatles have never sounded as soulful as his version of *Oh Darling*.

Toronto.com: Posted 02-01-2007

DK Ibomeka Profile

One of the most talked about new voices in Canadian music DK Ibomeka's strong, smooth jazzy blues style has made him stick out in the crowd of would-be musicians.

On his way to medical school Ibomeka took a detour into music after falling in love with the music of the incomparable Ella Fitzgerald. In 2006 he released his debut album *Love Stories* which was produced and co-written by Canadian R&B musician Haydain Neale lead singer of JackSoul.

In January Ibomeka's unique voice and sound was honored with a nomination for vocalist of the year by the Canadian Smooth Jazz Awards.

Belleville Intelligencer: February 03, 2007

Found Ella Fitzgerald CD opens up new door

By Luke Hendry

Five years ago, D.K. Ibomeka was singing Ella Fitzgerald songs in the shower and planning to go to medical school. Two years ago, he found himself sharing the stage with the Neville Brothers and Patti Labelle at the Montreal Jazz Festival. Tomorrow night, the London, Ont. native will open a sold-out show for Colin James at the Empire Theatre.

And as the 26-year-old said in a telephone interview this week, it all started with dusty CD. The son of Nigerian immigrants was moving into a new apartment about five years ago when he found an Ella Fitzgerald CD left there by a previous tenant. Bowled over by the legendary singer's work, Ibomeka (pronounced ee-bo-MECK-ah) started singing and writing in secret, never telling others about his new passion. "I would spend five hours a day just in my room singing along with Ella and Billie Holiday and Nina Simone," he said.

Ibomeka's parents had no idea he could sing until he told them of his desire to pursue a music career. They asked to hear him sing, and he launched into a kind of kitchen audition.

With his medical school plans fading, Ibomeka began studying vocal jazz at Toronto's Humber College and, as his confidence grew, tried a few public performances. "I would go up and sing at open mic nights and take off," he said, recalling his shyness. "I would get overwhelmed. People would come up to me and give me a good response ... and I'd leave." In spite of that, Ibomeka got noticed: before finishing his first year at Humber, he was offered a record deal. He took it, but continued studying through private lessons.

Though still trying to wrap his head around his success since then, Ibomeka said he's thrilled to be on his way to what appears to be a promising career. "It's really exciting, because as much as I wanted to be a doctor, it was nice to follow something that was a passion, and was not as concrete, as black-and-white, as medicine and science. It's been like living every day singing and writing. It's a completely different lease on life that I have right now, and I'm really enjoying it."

Ibomeka's manager introduced him to Haydain Neale, leader of Canadian band Jacksoul. Together they penned Ibomeka's debut album, *Love Stories*, based partly on the singer's romantic life, or lack thereof. "I would basically sit down and talk about all of my dating nightmares," laughed Ibomeka. "He got a real kick out of it."

He's since toured Europe to promote the album and will soon return for an encore; *Love Stories* is also slated for an Asian release.

In the meantime, Ibomeka has written about 12 new songs for his next CD, which could be released next year. Writing, like singing, is becoming easier, he said.

"Now I think I've got the hang of it."

London City Life Magazine (Canada): **January 2007**

10 to Watch in 2007

by Mary Ann Colhan

Serendipitous is perhaps the best word to describe DK Ibomeka's musical career. Ibomeka didn't study music at Sir Wilfrid Laurier Secondary School, where the six-foot, seven-inch gentle giant was both valedictorian and class clown, nor at McMaster University, where he majored in biochemistry.

Instead, in what must be every parent's nightmare (Ibomeka's parents emigrated from Nigeria to Canada 35 years ago), he announced in fourth-year university that he had found a higher calling than medicine. "My parents couldn't believe it because I never showed musical talent," recalls Ibomeka. "But when I sang for them they knew it was for real."

Blessed with a three-octave range, Ibomeka taught himself jazz stylings from recordings of the masters like Ella Fitzgerald. He transferred to the renown Humber College jazz music program and began to play the club circuit in Toronto.

That led to a recording contract, an agent and bookings at major venues like the 2005 Montreal Jazz Festival.

Ibomeka's raw talent also caught the eye of uber-cool Sony recording artist Haydain Neale, lead singer of jacksoul. It wasn't long before talk turned to collaboration. "He could not believe I had a suitcase of poems," says Ibomeka. Over the course of a few months, Neale hashed out melodies on guitar while Ibomeka coaxed his poems into song.

The result is Ibomeka's 2006 debut CD called *Love Stories*, which mixes traditional jazz with elements of soul, blues and pop. Produced and co-written by Neale, his song *Dedicated to You* hit number six on UK-based MOJO Magazine's December playlist.

Currently touring Europe, Ibomeka will be back in London in May to perform songs from *Love Stories* and pay tribute to influences that include Ray Charles, Nina Simone and Joe Williams.

Artscape (London , Ontario, Canada). **December 2006**

CD Review: Love Stories

by John Bock

With the advent of hip-hop and the substitute of beats for vocal brawn, it would be easy to presume that hypnotic soulful voices just don't happen anymore; that somehow it all ended with Sam Cooke, Otis Redding, Joe Williams or even Al Green. The arrival of newcomer DK Ibomeka therefore is a startling anomaly. As demonstrated on his debut CD, *Love Stories*, the 26-year-old Ibomeka has a disarmingly comfortable rumble of a voice with a welcome intimacy like no one this side of Barry White.

Ibomeka's talent is all the more remarkable for how long it lay dormant. The son of Nigerian immigrants to this country, he was at McMaster toiling through a science degree with medical school his next venture. However a quixotic encounter with the music of Ella Fitzgerald changed his life. Moving into a new student apartment, he spotted a Fitzgerald disc left behind a previous tenant. Entranced by the voice of the first lady of jazz; Ibomeka starting aping her stylings. Pressed by his parents to defend his wish to scrap medical school for a concert stage, he gave them a kitchen table audition. Stunned by their son's obvious musical prowess, they gave their blessing and Ibomeka struck out on his new career path.

After a stint in Humber College's music program, fellow Canadian Haydain Neale of Jacksoul took him into a studio, the result being *Love Stories*. R&B maven Neale wisely kept Ibomeka close to the moody jazz and soul the singer excels at.

Over the 12 tracks here, Ibomeka demonstrates why accolades have followed him since he took to the stage. Brushed drums, understated piano, and deftly plucked guitar are used sparingly, not a note is played that doesn't enhance Ibomeka's voice.

Highlights on *Love Stories* are many, with Nina Simone's sultry "Sugar In My Bowl" but one example of how Ibomeka can hypnotize and rivet with a ballad. "So Long (It's Alright)" penned by Neale, Ibomeka and another collaborator is a full-out jazz rave-up. It's a nice break, coming as it does in the second half of the disc after a number of slow-burning ballads.

It's unlikely that anyone who follows the, decidedly unsubtle, recommendation of this review to explore DK Ibomeka will be disappointed. And, rumour has it, Londoners will have the chance to check out this remarkable talent in concert next May when he headlines his own show at the Aeolian Hall.

John Bock has been writing about music, film and popular culture since he was 15 years old. A Londoner for over 20 years, he still finds people far funnier than he should.

Blues Matters! (UK): Love stories (Review)

DK Ibomeka

Love Stories - In/Out Records IOR770832

By Graeme Scott

Well I don't know what they are putting in the water over there in Canada, but whatever it is it sure is working.

This refulgent debut album from DK Ibomeka showcases just how strong the music coming out of Canada is. Blending blues, jazz and soul together with just a touch of pop, DK has ended up with a high quality product. So redolent of late night sexual attraction that if you fail to seduce your chosen partner with this on the turntable, give up and join a closed order.

DK is possessed of a voice that is very smooth, soaked with honey but not in the least sickly sweet. A worthy successor to Barry White's vacant crown perhaps? The twelve tracks here are a fifty-fifty split of original songs and covers. The opener, Someone To Love Me signals the strength of what is to come. If It's Over will melt even the hardest of hearts before moving into the up-beat and amusing I'll Be Anybody. Oh Darling is almost unrecognisable, as coming from the pens of Lennon and McCartney and Dedicated To You is just a perfect love song.

Interview, Consolation Prize, So Long (It's Alright) move this collection along and I can't help but be reminded of KD Lang's Ingénue album in the way it intermixes tempo's and aural textures to such good effect.

Found Around The Blues is straight out of a blues and jazz club at 2AM with lovers draped in each others arms on the dance floor while One Warm Night, Ain't No Woman and Sugar In My Bowl are the icing on this wonderful audio cake.

DK Ibomeka's the name, give him a listen when the CD is released at the end of September.

Graeme Scott

Classic Rock Society (UK) Review of "Love Stories":

10-05-2006

DK Ibomeka has released his debut album "Love Stories". He's a mighty impressive singer with great range and power. Perhaps his six feet seven inch frame helps out there! He actually blends a lot of different strands into his sound, drawing from the Blues as much as the jazz tradition, with splashes of soul and pure pop along the way. Taking his inspiration from the likes of Nina Simone, Ella Fitzgerald, and Ray Charles, his range is as impressive as his tone, with delicacy and emotion just as important as power and tone. He is redolent of Seal in that way.

BluesArt Studio Journal (Austria): Love Stories Review

Posted: 08-04-2006

DK IBOMEKA

Love Stories

In & Out Records IOR 77083-2

by Norman Darwen

Singer DK is the Canadian born son of Nigerian parents, with a silky-smooth, cool vocal style and a musical approach that occupies the territory where blues, jazz and soul meet. His own inventive lyrics (he helped to write half of the twelve tracks) are delivered in his rich, deep voice and he is accompanied by a small combo of equally talented musicians on guitars (electric and acoustic), keyboards, and a rhythm section including the gentler sound of acoustic bass.

Although much broader than a “simple” blues set, the blues is well-represented here. ‘If It’s Over’ is a gospel inflected bluesy ballad, Lennon/ McCartney’s ‘Oh! Darling’ evokes Charles Brown, ‘Found Around The Blues’ has particularly fine guitar work and is a little reminiscent of the sophisticated style of Percy Mayfield, whilst the closing ‘Sugar In My Bowl’ is the Bessie Smith number courtesy of Nina Simone. These are all pleasingly low-key, but the up-tempo blues shuffle - with almost rock and roll styled backing vocals - of ‘So Long (It’s Alright)’ is a fine change of pace and a chance to cut loose somewhat. There is no problem with that; it just showcases another facet of DK’s talent.

Like Ray Charles and the aforementioned Ms. Simone, who are both acknowledged inspirations, DK keeps one foot in the blues camp. And like those two artists, he is indeed a classy performer.

Norman Darwen

- <http://www.bluesart.at>

SceneandHeard.ca: Downtown Jazz Festival Reviews

08-01-2006

Jacksoul/Divine Brown/ DK Ibomeka
Harbourfront Centre, June 22

An all-Canadian bill at Harbourfront Centre kicked off the 2006 Downtown Toronto Jazz Festival. It was a perfect early summer night to sit back and relax or stand up and groove to three fabulous local bands. **No need to go south when the Canadian talent is as incredible as DK Ibomeka, Divine Brown and Jacksoul.**

The evening began with the smooth, deep, rich vocals of DK Ibomeka. The man is a towering presence -- physically and vocally. He sang a number of songs from his new CD, including one he co-wrote with Jacksoul. He also performed an excellent jazz version of the Beatles 'Oh Darling', and concluded his brief appearance with a Nina Simone's 'Spell on You'. He cleverly incorporated the introduction of his band into the lyrics of this song. It was a great way for him to end his set.

Divine Brown wowed the crowd with her sensual style -- a bit of scat and reggae and a lot of pop-rhythm and soul. The Jacksoul Band joined her on stage. She sang a collection of songs from her gold selling self-titled album. In the middle of her performance, she invited her daughter on stage and dedicated the song 'Single Momma' to all the single moms out there. She ended her show with a very sultry tune 'Old Skool Love'. This lovely and energetic artist had a great rapport with the audience and left them wanting more.

Headliners Jacksoul, and especially lead singer Haydain Neale, did not disappoint the fans and left no question as to why they were the headliners. Dressed in basic black, they performed their singles plus a number of songs off of their latest CD. The guitarist provided an amazing acoustic accompaniment to Neale's vocals on 'Try'. This got the audience going, as did their superb version of the Guess Who's 'These Eyes'. Neale did not leave the audience 'High and Dry' as he got them to their feet and to sing along. **Ibomeka was invited back out for the finale. It was a great way to end an amazing show and to kick off the festival.**

- Anna Stitski

• sceneandheard.ca

Tandem: The Love Stories of DK Ibomeka

07-23-2006

The Love Stories of DK Ibomeka

Local singer turned down med school to heal broken hearts

By Kerry Doole

When DK Ibomeka walks onto a stage, he captures your attention in more ways than one. There is that voice with a three-octave range that includes a rich and resonant bass, and there is also his striking physical presence. At a towering six foot seven, this son of Nigerian immigrants fits the image of an NBA player more than a jazz/soul crooner, but it is music, not hoops, that is his passion.

The London, Ontario-born Ibomeka is now Toronto-based, and has quickly made a mark on the local scene. That is now extending nationally with the June release of his debut CD, *Love Stories*, a work being greeted with positive reviews. It was produced by Jacksoul mainman Haydain Neale, who also co-wrote five songs with DK, and contributed two other originals.

Ibomeka is full of praise for his creative collaborator. "Haydain devoted a lot of time to the project. As opposed to just sitting down and making the record, he helped me learn a lot about songwriting. He was a real mentor, working with me on the craft of songwriting, singing and performing. It was like a masterclass for a whole summer, and we had a really good time with it. Haydain still works with me, coming to my rehearsals, inviting me to open for him, helping with the machine. He is amazingly generous."

Love Stories is an impressively eclectic record, featuring jazz, blues, pop, and r'n b elements, and including covers ranging from the Beatles ("Oh! Darling") to Nina Simone ("Sugar In My Bowl"). That variety reflects the shared musical approach of Haydain and DK.

After catching DK in performance at The Top O' The Senator, Neale expressed an interest in working with him. "Originally, I'd planned to do an album of standards, sticking to the jazz genre, with a little bit of blues," recalls Ibomeka. "The more we talked about my own love stories, telling him some of the humorous things that have happened to me over the last few years, we decided to turn them into songs. Haydain really encouraged me to take that next step." Although a novice songwriter, Ibomeka has long kept jotting down his thoughts and emotions in the form of poetry. Some of these poems provided the starting point for songs on *Love Stories*.

"We then went into studio without any real idea of the direction we'd take," Ibomeka continues. "I was really happy to have that opportunity to be creative in the studio with the musicians. We had the skeletons of the songs and created on the fly. It just turned out that one song would lend itself to more of a bluesy feel, one to more a jazzy feel. To me, it is all about the lyric and performing the song. As long as I honour it, then what surrounds it, the specific genre, isn't as important."

Some of Toronto's elite players are featured on the album, including bassist George Koller, drummer Davide Drenzo, guitarist Justin Abedin, and keyboardist Ron Lopata. The result is a disc with genuine international commercial potential. Ibomeka now has a European agent, and hopes to perform there when *Love Stories* is released across the pond.

He recently played his first gig outside Canada, as part of a star-studded Canada Day lineup that played in London's famed Trafalgar Square. Looks like those original career plans of becoming a doctor are now scuttled, we suggest. "I am aware now of what I have a passion for, and that is enough to last me a lifetime," DK confirms.

We can thank a forgetful student for this change of heart, as Ibomeka confirms. "I was studying at MacMaster in Hamilton, and that's where I discovered Ella Fitzgerald. When I moved into an apartment, someone had left an Ella CD behind. That was the beginning of getting into that type of music. I was drawn into how her voice would make me feel. Then I explored different singers, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Ray Charles, and that's when I started singing more."

Love Stories is out on Wychwood Park/Fusion 111 DK Ibomeka appears at PartiGras in the Distiller District, July 22, Dundas Square, Aug. 2, and Nathan Phillips Square, Aug. 17.

• corrieretandem.com

The Wholenote Magazine: Love Stories (Review)

07-01-2006

Love Stories

DK Ibomeka

by Sophia Perlman

“Love Stories”, the debut effort from Toronto vocalist DK Ibomeka, fuses jazz with soul, gospel and pop influences to create a sound uniquely his own. The original tunes, many of which were penned with producer Haydain Neale, are at turns moving – as on the Latin inspired Consolation Prize, contrasted by the offbeat I’ll Be Anybody. Ibomeka also offers up his take on some standard and new standard material –including a wonderfully laid-back version of the Nina Simone classic Sugar in My Bowl, and a soulful treatment of the Lennon/McCartney classic Oh! Darling.

Ibomeka, who stands 6’7”, sings with his characteristically rich baritone. Found Around the Blues is sung mostly in an upper register, which conveys a sweet innocence that takes one almost by surprise, while he practically wails on the bluesy So Long (It’s Alright).

Ibomeka is backed by a solid group of musicians which includes George Koller on bass, Davide Drenzo on drums and percussion, Ron Lopata on various keyboards and Justin Abedin on guitar. Roger Travassos, John “JK” Kanakis, Kevin Barrett and Alistair Robertson all also make guest appearances. Abedin, who co-wrote So Long (It’s Alright), also plays some beautiful accompaniment on the Chaplin/Kahn/Zarett standard Dedicated to You.

From: <http://www.thewholenote.com/>

- [The Wholenote \(discoveries page\)](#)

The Live Music Report: DK charms us with his Love Stories

06-13-2006

Report by Sue Bullas Humbert of the Live Music Report :

The perfect recipe for a CD release party: an intimate setting, a wine tasting, good food and lovely people. This is exactly what DK Ibomeka had Tuesday night at Revival for the release of Love Stories.

DK is expressive, charming and fun. He sings us a thank you for attending his release “I appreciate you taking the time to celebrate with me.” The crowd was engaged from his first step on stage. He loves his songs, and shared his inspiration for several of them, such as “Interview”, relating his comparison of a first date to a job interview.

DK experimented with singing after hearing and being moved by an Ella Fitzgerald recording. He quietly wrote songs and developed his voice, eventually auditioning for his parents a capella in the kitchen before committing to a career in music. DK values his instrument and has a knack for expressing his three octave range voice throughout his songs.

Kevin Barrett (guitar), Kevin Adamson (keys), Drew Birston (bass), Aubrey Dayle (drums) gave inspired support to DK’s voice, seeming to love the music as much as the singer himself. DK has such a strong presence that I don’t think the CD entirely captures the freshness of his style.

DK’s boyish qualities and his humourous style came to the fore during his admission that he can’t tie his own tie (his neighbour helped). After attending the release party I think it’s safe to say we’d all offer to help him with his tie anytime.

- www.thelivemusicreport.com

London Free Press: Ibomeka feels the love in London

06-10-2006

James Reaney, Columnist

The London Free Press

June 10, 2006

DK (DeeKaye) Ibomeka is feeling the love in London . . . and London, England -- and just about everywhere.

The former Laurier Secondary School student's debut CD, *Love Stories (Fusion III)*, is just out -- the culmination of 18 months of close collaboration with Jacksoul's Haydain Neale. Later this month, Ibomeka brings his soulful three-octave range and six-foot-seven self to Trafalgar Square on June 30 as part of the Canada Day celebrations in London, England.

Ibomeka will be in the company of such Canadian stars as Ron Sexsmith at the Canadian high commission event. He'll be singing with jazzman Peter Appleyard's band at the gig.

"I feel very privileged to have to have been asked by the high commissioner. I'm so excited," Ibomeka said yesterday.

The 26-year-old is the son of Nigerian immigrants who lived in that other London for several years before moving to the Forest City. Ibomeka still has a sister there. "I always wanted to visit there. It's exciting to be going to perform," he says.

A measure of how much is happening for Ibomeka is that this interview took place as the singer was going to a CBC Radio broadcast yesterday.

Ibomeka, now Toronto-based, plays a hometown gig on Aug. 19 at Aeolian Hall. He was magnificent there early in 2005, opening for Buffy Sainte-Marie when he was already working on *Love Stories* with Neale. "He's like a brother. He's like a mentor. He's my singing coach policeman," Ibomeka says of the Canadian R&B singer and producer.

Ibomeka had only begun to sing seriously after falling under the spell of an Ella Fitzgerald album a few years ago. He had been studying sciences at McMaster and was likely headed for medical school. Exposure to Ella took him into music. He suddenly found himself singing the standards songbook.

Another twist happened during the work on *Love Stories*. Neale produced and arranged the CD, but took the novice's poems and their emotions seriously. Soon, Ibomeka was sharing his "neurotic dating stories" -- and the soulful sounds of his real-life *Love Stories* emerged from all those mellowing sorrows.

Ibomeka has already played the Montreal jazz festival and been signed by a big-name agency since he last played Aeolian Hall. So maybe it's no surprise Appleyard's crew is happy to adjust to that big new voice at Trafalgar Square.

• lfpress.com

Toronto Sun: Column by Nicholas Davis

06-05-2006

ELLA SET HIS PATH ON NEW PATH

By NICHOLAS DAVIS

At the request of Canada's High Commissioner in London, D.K. Ibomeka is off to Britain at the end of the month to sing at their Canada Day celebrations.

For Ibomeka it's like his life is coming full circle.

"My parents lived in London, England for many years before moving our family to London, Ont.," says Ibomeka, who now calls Toronto home. "I'm touched to be given the honour of performing there on Canada Day."

Ibomeka never thought that if he ended up visiting his parents' former homeland it would be as a singer. But life, as is often the case, takes strange twists and turns that can only be credited to fate.

"I wasn't one of those people who grew up singing," Ibomeka says. "I was well on my way to med school when I moved into this house and found that some foolish person had left behind an Ella Fitzgerald CD. I dusted it off and started playing it. I also started singing it because I fell in love with the record. This discovery led me to buy CDs of Nina Simone and Ray Charles and I started singing their songs too.

"For a long time I only sang behind closed doors, but a lot of friends told me I was a good singer. So I eventually started hitting open mike nights. The response I received was overwhelming - so overwhelming that I would run off the stage and literally out the door."

One night though, jazz musician and radio personality Jaymz Bee wouldn't let D.K. run out the door. The performance he caught of Ibomeka's was too good to ignore.

"I was singing Billie Holiday's A Fine and Mellow," remembers Ibomeka. "After finishing the song I looked up and I noticed I had received a standing ovation. It kind of freaked me out. Jaymz stopped me from running out of the club and told me this is what I should be doing for a living."

Bee started bringing Ibomeka to his jazz shows and allowed Ibomeka to showcase his three octave voice in front of a lot of different audiences. "After a while it became apparent to me that this is what I should be doing."

After convincing himself to take the leap into the world of music, Ibomeka had to convince his parents that leaving school was the right thing to do. His parents, who are from Nigeria, always stressed to him the value of an education.

"My parents thought I was crazy when I first told them," says Ibomeka. "You have to remember I was a psychology student with plans on being a doctor. Plus, my parents had never heard me sing before. They made me audition for them. I sang an a capella version of Amazing Grace. After a few notes my mother said she was fully supportive of my decision. My father came around as well."

Ibomeka started his career singing standards, but about a year ago he hooked up with Haydain Neale of Jacksoul who offered to help him work on some original material for an album.

"I had boxes of poetry that I had been writing since I was quite young," says Ibomeka. "A lot of it was garbage, but some of it was good and I wanted to turn those good ones into songs. Haydain really wanted me to learn the craft of songwriting so he allowed me to experiment and we pushed a lot of boundaries. We wanted to make an album of stories."

The end result is Ibomeka's debut album Love Stories. It was produced by Neale and is available in stores tomorrow. Unlike most people trying to make it in the music business, Ibomeka's journey has been relatively stress-free.

"I feel extremely lucky to have people around me who believe in me so much," says Ibomeka. "I've been blessed with talent and surrounded by wonderful musicians, and along with having my family support, it's making the music business pleasurable for me."

Maple Blues Online:
DK Ibomeka Love Stories
Wychwood Park/Fusion
06-01-2006

Review by John Valenteyn

DK, it was Deekaye, is a young local singer whose performances have made him a man to watch. He has appeared on a couple of CDs and now his own is here. He has chosen a contemporary R&B ballad style, gorgeously produced by Haydain Neale of Jacksoul, and I think they have a huge hit on their hands. DK and Neale have supplied most of the songs and there are a number of songs that justify a review in this column. DK has a beautiful warm voice that makes the most of these ballads. He can belt it out too, at least in relative terms, "So Long (It's Alright)" is a fine original bluesy goodbye song that might be a slow song on any other album but at whatever tempo, it's a standout. "If It's Over" and a truly subdued "Found Around The Blues" should satisfy any blues lover as will the version of the Beatles' "Oh! Darling" (!). "Ain't No Woman" is another highlight and the original song has a line about wanting `sugar in my bowl'. The next and closing song is a version of that Nina Simone standard and it fits in perfectly. George Koller on bass, Davide Direnzo on drums, Justin Abedin on guitars, Ron Lopata on keys and Neale on backing vocals all do their part wondrously for a CD that can fit in to almost any taste. You should be hearing this one all over the radio dial. The CD will be out on the 6th and the official Toronto launch is at Hugh's Room on June 14.

- [The Toronto Blues Society](#)

Parry Sound North Star: The Sound Get's Jacked Up

02-01-2006

by Stephannie Johnson

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"I was pleasantly surprised with the soulful voice and rhythms of up-and-coming DK Ibomeka, who opened for Jacksoul. Accompanied by just an acoustic guitar, he got the crowd laughing and singing along to both original works and covers of Ray Charles and the Beatles. His vocal range is literally out of this world as is the stature of this six-foot-something man.

Favourites

My personal favourites were, I'll be Anybody and Interview, the later of which talks about the ironic similarities between a first date and a job interview. Mr. Ibomeka's voice was as deep, smooth and welcoming as a full-bodied glass of red wine after a long day at the office. His debut CD is set to be released this spring and I'll definitely be picking up a copy."

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To read the full show review at the Parry Sound North Star web site and view show photos by Marynn Hall, please visit the link below.

- parrysoundnorthstar.com

London Free Press:
Aeolian Hall, London - May 2, 2005
(DK Opens for Buffy Sainte-Marie)
04-02-2005

By James Reaney

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Former London jazz and soul singer DK Ibomeka opened for Sainte-Marie.

The six-foot-seven son of Nigerian immigrants has a three-octave range. The baritone has studied with Woodstock's vocal-coach-to-the-stars, Elaine Overholt. Jacksoul's Haydain Neale has been working with Ibomeka and is producing the singer's album.

The new Canadian crooners such as Michael Buble and Matt Dusk may have the big label deals and the headlines right now.

But as soon as enough people hear what the former Laurier secondary school student can do with Ray Charles' Hallelujah! I Love Her So -- or the Beatles' Oh Darling -- it won't be long before DeeKaye is moving up.

The scheduled opener.... had to cancel on Sunday, clearing the way for DeeKaye to offer the best opening set heard in London in a long time.

The full London Free Press review to the full Buffy-Sainte Marie show (including DK's opening set) is at the following link

• jam.canoe.ca/Music

Toronto Star: Aug 5, 2004

Towering Dee Kaye Born to Sing Jazz

by Geoff Chapman

His voice is big, his range is big — and he is big.

At 6-foot-7, you can't miss vocalist Dee Kaye, but it's not his stature that you'll remember after a performance, but the way he can project a song. And at just 24, he has a fab future ahead of him.

I first heard him on a typically storm-battered night at May's Distillery Jazz Festival, but he was more than equal to the challenge, swinging and scatting hard — and caressing ballads. It's no wonder he's been compared to Joe Williams of Count Basie band fame.

Kaye will be performing with Jaymz Bee's Royal Jelly Orchestra Saturday night from 9:30 on the Centennial Square Stage at Oakville's 12th annual jazz festival.

"I'm a dreamer," he said in an interview. "I didn't really sing when I was growing up in London, though I'd add harmonies to music that I liked, Boyz2Men and Tracy Chapman. It was intriguing. I'd spend five hours a day trying to recreate the sound, behind a locked door.

"In my final year at Sir Wilfrid Laurier High School, I sang 'Silent Night' at the Christmas show and, later on, when I was at McMaster, I was the voice of Audrey the man-eating plant in Little Shop Of Horrors in a Hamilton show and I played the hunchback in The Hunchback Of Notre Dame at the Fringe in Edmonton.

"At McMaster, I switched courses from biochemistry to abnormal psychology and I took part in some cabaret shows. It was at that time, about three years ago, that I discovered Ella Fitzgerald. She sang with such feeling. I was blown away.

"I concluded that I couldn't not sing, so I enrolled in the vocal jazz program at Humber College. Students were given passes to the IAJE (jazz educators') convention in Toronto (in January 2003). I took a demo tape and gave it to the guy in the Berklee School of Music booth and, a while later, they offered me a large scholarship but even with that, it was too expensive."

DeeKaye was determined to keep singing, so he took part in open-mike sessions at venues like The Rex, Healey's and Sax On Yonge, and made the jump into the big time with a successful week at the Senator in February. His six-song EP disc, two featuring Jaymz Bee's ensemble, showcase his abilities in jazz, soul and blues, and a full-length CD should be ready early in 2005.

"Singing has come naturally to me. It involves poetry, which I love, and has passion but the part I like best is the feeling, the communication of lyrics that send a message."

Kaye, who's taken lessons from Elaine Overholt, is a regular in the "divo" series at Potato Blues Supper Club (he's there next Wednesday) and will appear at the Oshawa Jazz and Blues Festival next week with the Bee orchestra.

"My mom and dad encouraged me to sing, even though with my straight As I was really meant to be a doctor. I auditioned for them and I think they saw the passion in my eyes. Ray Charles was a big inspiration for me and so is Nina Simone for her lack of pretension. I love Norah Jones. I'm goal-oriented. In two years' time I want to be as comfortable as I can be onstage, to make music that transcends."

At 24, Dee Kaye has already made an impressive singing debut in Toronto.