

Jua – Short BIO

Close to ten years ago, Jua Howard was making quite a name for himself in neo-soul circles, crooning in velvety tenor tones reminiscent of Luther Vandross and Donny Hathaway in clubs from New York City to London. “Anticipation”, his 2007 self-released debut CD of mostly original ballads, was picking up play on Smooth Jazz and R&B stations. Yet Jua, who uses only his first name professionally (Swahili for “sun”), was having second thoughts about his musical direction. The Chicago-born singer says, “With the R&B neo-soul scene, everything started to sound the same.”

While living in the Washington D.C. area and working for Howard University, Jua gigged as a background vocalist with the legendary Blackbyrds, the band best-known for such 1970s hits as “Walking in Rhythm” and “Happy Music.” “Jazz was clearly a big part of their foundation,” he says of the Blackbyrds. “Singing with them made me think seriously about pursuing a career in jazz.”

During the summer of 2009, Jua moved to the San Francisco area and enrolled at Berkeley’s Jazzschool Institute, now known as the California Jazz Conservatory. As one of the inaugural students in their Jazz Vocals program, he became the first recipient of the Conservatory’s **Mark Murphy Vocal Jazz Scholarship**, named for veteran poll-winning singer Murphy. Jua also studied privately with vocal coach Raz Kennedy, formerly of Bobby McFerrin’s “Voicestra”, while there.

In June 2014, Jua emerged as a unique and highly emotive jazz vocal stylist with the release of his sophomore recorded project “*Colors of Life*.” Jua currently resides in Raleigh, North Carolina, where he continues song-writing, performing and working on his next project.