

ERICA CAMPBELL

Her New Chapter

BY MONIQUE FARMER

For most people, change is a force to be reckoned with and in many instances it's a natural human response to meet that force with resistance. But for Gospel music songstress Erica Campbell, one half of the Gospel duo Mary Mary, change is nothing more than an opportunity to conquer new challenges and a chance to grow and experience one's fullest potential.



For Campbell, 2013 was a year marked by a significant amount of change. Following two successful seasons of the WE TV reality series, *Mary Mary*, in which she co-stars with her sister and fellow *Mary Mary* group member, Tina Campbell, Erica decided to embark on a solo career. Not long after making the decision, her entire family was impacted by an extramarital affair Tina's husband, Teddy, was discovered to have been involved in during the taping. And, near the middle of the summer of 2013, the sisters lost their father, Eddie A. Atkins, Jr., to a battle with cancer.

Those adversities, however, have helped build her strength and lead her into a new year where she knows a fresh start awaits. "The best thing about a fresh start is the newness, the excitement of starting over, planning and strategizing, then being able to watch it all come to fruition," said Campbell.



Erica

What you
plug into will
become your
power source.

*"When you say 'I can't' or
'I don't' or 'What if?'
you're fueling the negative."*



SINGING SOLO

After 13 years of sharing the stage with her sisters, Campbell has experienced a recent taste of that newness with the launch of her solo career. "There is so much (work) putting out a solo record other than just recording and giving it to people," Campbell said. "So the same care and concern I've put into Mary Mary for the last 13 years is the same care and concern I want to put into my solo career."

In speaking about her first solo album, "Help," set for release March 25, Campbell could barely contain her excitement. "I've been really blessed in that I was able to start my solo career while working with my sister," said Campbell. During the group's concerts last year, she would sing the first song released on her solo album, "A Little More Jesus."

With its old school gospel sound and rock and roll flavor, the song topped the charts last summer—an outcome Campbell says she can't exactly say she predicted early on.

When she first heard the music in the studio, Campbell was hesitant about the sound, which was alternative to the more contemporary vibrations for which Mary Mary is known.

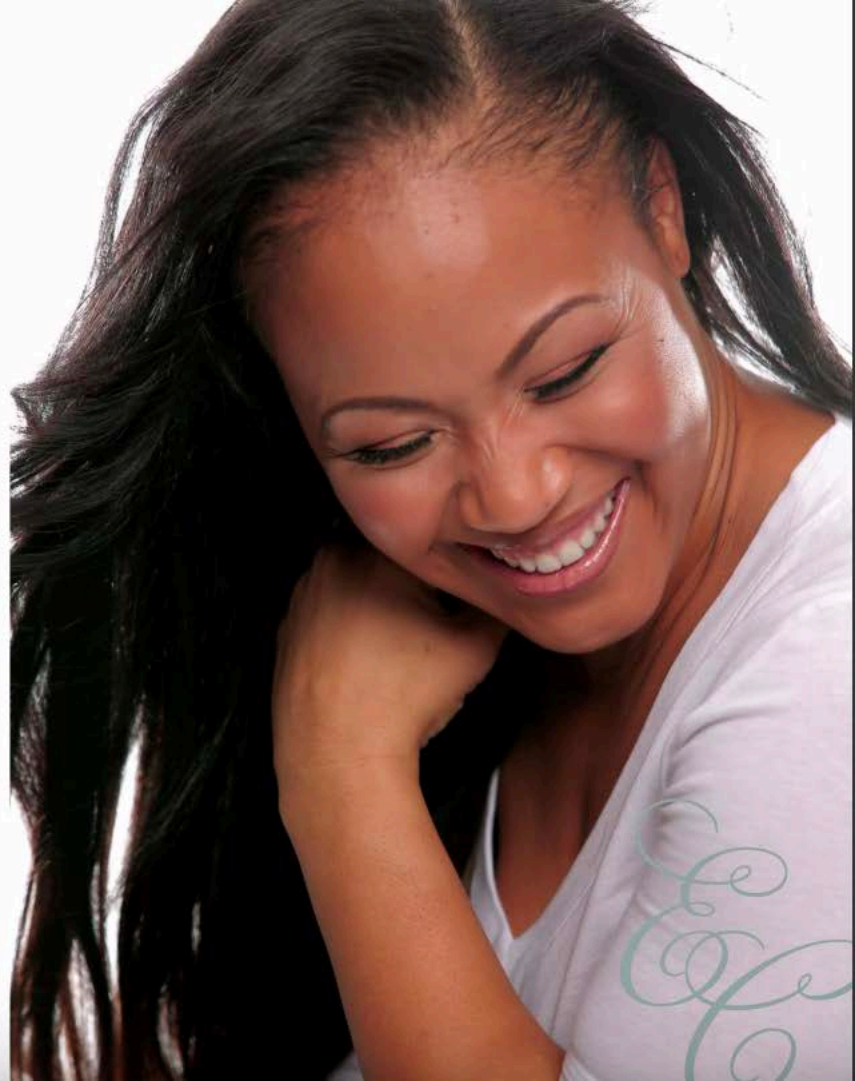
But, much like her decision to branch out into her solo career, Campbell said she believes timing played a key role.

"When you move in God's time - even if you are afraid or even if it doesn't look or sound like what you're used to or what you think it should - you should just move forward and God will get the glory."

Much of Campbell's movement will be aired for fans to watch during Season 3 of the sisters' show, which will premier Feb. 27. This season will show a side of the sisters never before seen by the audiences who have shared their living rooms with the duo and come to know them.

"I think people will be shocked," Campbell said. "Your hearts will break for us and what we went through, but you will also see the fight and the fire...when God starts shaking the tree, all the loose pieces fall to the ground and all the loose pieces were falling left and right."

While Campbell advises that parents pre-record the episodes and review them prior to allowing children to watch because the material is "heavy," she said she feels comfortable with what audiences will watch





on the screen. Expect Season 3 to be “andid, open, raw, honest,” said Campbell. Expect to watch and experience the challenges many Christians face, but in a manner that will help generate conversations about how members in the Body of Christ go through tough times and the important role faith plays in helping to overcome life’s challenges.



STEPPING OUT ON FAITH

Amidst chaotic times, Campbell has managed to maintain her focus and continue to work toward her goals, dreams and a vision of creating a daring, bold and faith-filled legacy. The mantra that helps her push through? “No fear, just faith.”

“Sometimes we have fear, and we’re not calling it fear, but it is fear. It’s fear. It’s worry. It’s doubt. It’s negativity. It’s all these things,” said Campbell. “There is a spirit realm that exists, and you can either activate your angels to work in your favor or you can tie their hands. When

you say ‘I can’t’ or ‘I don’t’ or ‘What if?’ you’re fueling the negative. The only thing that can really help you manage is operating through God’s word and knowing that you’re more than a conqueror.”

It’s that same focus on the positive and a desire to achieve the goals, dreams and desires God has placed inside of her that have driven the mother of three to consistently reach for new heights. As if being a wife, mother, co-star of a hit reality show and owner of a new solo career weren’t laboring enough, Campbell has also managed to squeeze in time to write a book.

“I’ve had this story for maybe six years and I wanted it to be a play,” she said. “I took it to a few people here in Hollywood and one company I met with said, ‘This is a movie—I’ve never heard this story before’...I’m really excited about giving it to the world and I can’t wait for people to experience it.”

Unable to divulge additional details about the plot or the title, Campbell encourages fans to be on the lookout for a book release later this year.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

With a full plate daily and regular list of to-dos, Campbell understands well the importance of stillness and daily meditation on the Word. Still, she said, “Sometimes I feel like I’m falling apart and I don’t have an answer at all. I have to plug back into the source.”

“I used to think that it was so corny that my Mom would listen to Bible tapes all the time. Now that I’m a Mommy, sometimes I do the same thing,” Campbell chuckled. “What you plug into will become your power source.”

As a Los Angeles resident, she has plenty of time to power up during commutes back and forth on the 405 (Interstate highway in Southern California) where she finds herself in creative thought, meditative thought or silent prayer many days. Campbell has also achieved solace through the power of collective prayer with her family members. Following the death of their father, the family instituted a family prayer line and daily prayer, which takes place during a designated morning and evening time to bring the family together as a unit to pray for coverage and healing. The practice has brought the family much closer, said Campbell.

“We get on the phone and we cover everything,” she said. “Children, marriages, ministry, individual dreams and desires and for God to reveal any snakes. We’ve been consistent. We have not stopped. We have not missed a day.” Also since their father died, the family has made a pact to vacation together – sisters, kids, husbands, and pets!

“Whether I’m in a good space or a bad space, I just worship and get with God and gain my strength. It allows me to have a happiness that can’t be explained whether I’m working or being Mom or going online to find new recipes to cook for my kids (Erica loves Mexican food!) or going out with my husband Warryn. When I’m good with God, I’m good with everyone else.”

