Earnest Pugh
“Earnest Pugh Live: Rain On Us”

Earnest Pugh is one of gospel music’s finest vocalists. With a gifting and an anointing rarely found in the genre, he’s well on his way to becoming one of its top artists. That fact is readily apparent on his brand new EPM Music Group/Black Smoke Music Worldwide release Earnest Pugh Live: Rain On Us. Produced by Michael Bereal and recorded in the nation’s capitol-Washington, D.C., at the Temple of Praise, the project not only is a fabulous collection of great music, but it’s also a powerful witness and testament to the faithfulness of God.

Through the CD’s 17 tracks, fans will find themselves clapping, bowing and lifting hands to God. With strains of traditional, contemporary and urban gospel music, Earnest Pugh is clearly at home giving God His due. Although he’s known as a consummate vocalist, this project finds Earnest stepping into the worship leader role.

While the CD exhibits the joy and peace found in the Lord, Earnest went through major challenges prior to the live recording. “The last couple of years have been sort of an emotional rollercoaster for me,” shares the psalmist. “Life hit me with some unbearable obstacles ranging from health issues to the sudden death of my beloved mother and grandmother (within six months of each other). In the midst of that dark time, my saving grace came through listening to songs that my industry friends/writers submitted to me for the CD recording. Amazingly, God allowed me to prove and test each song through my own personal trials.”

The CD’s opener, “The Great I Am” is accented by wonderful instrumentation and stunning background vocals, it’s high energy at its core. The vamp is contagious with a funky hook but maintains it’s reverence for God. He even slips in a dash of reggae in the chorus, helping us to accept the invitation into his musical experience. Pugh’s riveting 5-octave vocals are clearly on display leaving the listener in the rafters.

The styling of Demetrius McClendon’s musical contribution, “Hosanna”, has echoes of a smooth jazz creation. Don’t get it twisted though – the relaxed groove still leaves plenty of room for hyperactive musical adoration to God. His background singers, Charles Butler & Trinity, are on one accord on this cut and throughout. The artist even throws in an electric guitar solo and multiple key changes to add to the excitement. Embracing unapologetic worship, the artist pulls us into his communion with the Lord. One of the strongest tracks on the project, “Rain On Us”, the title track written by Daniel Moore, Sr., will find the passionate Christian in a posture of pure worship. You almost expect the rain to pour once the reprise is done.

The track has even more power when the testimony of the song is revealed. Earnest says, “God spoke to me one morning as I was watching the news. There was a story concerning the state of the economy. Fear tried to grip my heart so I began to pray. During the prayer, God instructed me to redirect my attention to the economy of God. He promised to “Rain On Us” his favor and prosperity if we will remain faithful to His word.” Those who love to hear Earnest wrap his luscious vocals around a ballad will love “Rain On Us”.
Created for the gospel choir, “Bless His Name” necessitates immediate praise. You can almost visualize the choir robes swaying on this amazing track.

After “cutting a step”, Earnest gives us a taste of the hymn “Bless His Name”.

Flaunting his ability to glide between different musical styles, Pugh gives us an urban groove with some funk and even some go-go on the headbobber “Our God”. He has no problem flipping the switch and taking today’s sounds and merging it with a provocative gospel message.

“Our Voice”, beautiful in its simplicity, is a reminder to every Christian which voice to listen to. The song, penned by Keith Williams, is one of Pugh’s favorite. The singer says, “The song urges believers to search for the peace of God by listening for His voice. The lyric content is incredible in this song. One particular line reads: “Let me hear you voice in all that I do. And let me know be found where I don’t hear you.”

Taking us back to the time of wooden pews and stained glass windows, Williams’ “My Rock” is evidence that Pugh can do traditional gospel as well as contemporary. Earnest ministers powerfully on this song, one that Grandma is certain to love. To top it off, he brings in gospel icon Vanessa Bell Armstrong who “tears it to pieces” on the song’s reprise.

“I Trust You”, another heart-moving worship tune, is followed by a seemingly impromptu rendition of the classic hymn, “I’ll Say Yes”, complete with the “Earnest Pugh” makeover. Continuing in a spirit of worship, “God Wants To Heal You” finds the psalmist speaking directly to all who are hurting. He even offers a prayer of healing on the recording. And speaking of “healing”, Pugh also takes on the Richard Smallwood classic “Healing”, complete with a guest appearance by the composer himself. The CD closes out with a prayer and proclamation from Pugh’s pastor, Rev. Dr. Grainger Browning of Ebenezer AME Church in Fort Washington, MD.

Earnest Pugh, once again, has provided gospel music with an incredible opportunity to praise.