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Musiq
The Funk Soul Child
By [Rosalind Cummings-Yeates](#)



"Philly has a legacy of being real true and potent. It's just so concentrated, in a small package." Summing up his hometown, 23-year-old hip-hop soul singer [Musiq Soulchild](#)--with his slight physical stature and unvarnished, straightforward approach to singing sweet anthems about burgeoning relationships--could also be talking about himself.

With his light, sinewy vocals, Musiq sounds as if he's spent years immersed in the sounds of '70s soul, and he admits that growing up, he listened to classic soul artists like [Donny Hathaway](#), [Aretha Franklin](#), [Stevie Wonder](#), and [Chaka Khan](#), now all major influences on his own sound. "My father would play a lot of [soul music], and it just started making more sense as I got older," he says. "I started incorporating it into my style.

That's evident from "Just Friends (Sunny)," a cheery tune brimming with scatting and individualized expression that first appeared on the [Nuttty Professor II: The Klumps](#) soundtrack and is now the first track off his full-length debut, [Aijuswanaseing](#). Musiq's freshman CD aptly showcases his emotional vocals and free-flowing style, from the low-down groove of "Seventeen," to the velvety smoothness of "Mary Go Round."

"My name, Musiq Soulchild, is two words--'muse' and 'IQ'--because I want to serve as an inspiration. I want people to get

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the inspiration to be creative from me."

A product of the creative Philadelphia music scene that has produced such innovative artists as the [Roots](#), [Jazzyfatnastees](#), [Jill Scott](#), and [Bahamadia](#), Musiq honed his talents working the city's numerous open-mic venues. "The whole vibe of Philly has a slow-burn effect that you don't even realize until you sit back and reflect," he explains. "You think there's not a lot going on, but there is--you just have to let it sink in." Originally working as a human beatbox, Musiq Soulchild (aka Talib Johnson) earned his moniker because he's always been associated with music. "They'd see me coming and they'd say, 'Hey, here comes music boy,'" he recalls. "I just turned it around to Musiq Soulchild. It's two words--'muse' and 'IQ'--because I want to serve as an inspiration. I want people to get the inspiration to be creative from me. Sometimes, you gotta come outta the box."

Actually, Musiq refuses to be boxed into a particular category when it comes to his musical style. "Just because I'm coming off a soulful thing, doesn't mean that's all I can do," he insists. "I don't want to be pigeonholed...I want to be appreciated as an artist."

Taking note of the jazzy vocal arrangements and heartfelt delivery on *Aijuswanaseing*, it's unlikely that the singer will be easily pigeonholed or have any limits placed on his musical development. In fact, it seems like he already has all of that figured out. "I'm gonna knock down those doors, and open it a whole lot more," he declares.

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