

Harold Payne Music Connection article

Songwriter's profile

By Dan Kimpel

Snoop Dogg, 50 Cent and G-Unit: the glowering lineup of urban artists on Harold Payne's most recent hit list of 100+ songwriter credits may be a touch deceiving. "I have a longtime relationship with Bobby Womack," explains Payne, "and a fair amount of rappers have either done our songs or sampled them."

This summer, Payne is releasing *Positively Live*, an audio document on Affinity Records that presents the singer/songwriting making a magical connection in front of live audiences. "Rather than do something artist-oriented, I decided to do something concept-oriented," he notes. "Rather than calling it 'Harold Payne,' and someone asking, 'Who is Harold Payne?' It's as if it was 'Russian Zither Music for Sunday Brunch' — people would know what it is. I thought, 'A lot of the songs I do are real positive.'" Hence, Payne's affirmation of the concept he long championed, "Positive Music," as he observes, "Looking back, you realize everything you're doing in life is leading toward something."

With tracks taken from a variety of sources, some with Payne solo, some with backing vocalists and musicians, *Positively Live* fits Payne's credo of authenticity. "I like the whole MP3, YouTube thing where people are less concerned about the technical quality and more concerned about the content," Payne says. "I'm more instinctively a live guy."

That's a modest understatement. Payne usually performs a minimum of three nights a week, every week, in a variety of live situations. "It gives me a chance to get sweat on all of my songs and to get ideas," he suggests. A Payne trademark is his intuitive knack for creating songs on the spot, with suggestions for titles, themes or situations suggested by his audience. This has led him to a new venture: writing custom songs for a variety of events, from corporate "roasts and toasts" to family commemorations. "Fortunately, the last couple years, I've connected with some high-end meeting planners. It pays

well. I'm still being a singer/songwriter."

On Sundays, Payne performs in churches: New Thought, Churches of Religious Science, Unitarian, Unity, and other non-denominational locales. "If it's a positive place to play, and if they want me I'm there," he expresses. "About the time I put out my *Power of Positive Music* CD, which is a compilation of myself and the group Gravity (with Payne, vocalist Clydene Jackson Edwards and percussionist Oliver C. Brown) it opened up these opportunities." The instant songwriting might also come into play in these venues, as Payne can listen to a speech or talk, and while doing so write a song that reflects the theme that he will subsequently perform.

Positively Live contains Payne classics, "Pass it On" and "Music Speaks Louder Than Words" (a theme for several International Songwriter and Peace conference events including the Soviet American Songwriter Summit) alongside newer songs like the stunning "Letting Go," that speaks of a spirit surrendering this terrestrial plane in flight to the next level. Despite being gleaned from different performance venues at different times, Payne's expressive, bluesy voice is the shining thread that ties it all together into messages that are benevolent, never strident.

"A lot of these things go in circles and they help each other along," professes Payne. "The fact that I'm writing songs all the time, and doing improv and custom songs and songs for projects all keep my writing muscles together and maintains the direct line to whatever source allows me to do this. My personal philosophy is that whenever someone is putting out a positive message it is an increment for goodness. Any specifics beyond that are not as important as the fact that people are doing something good."

More about Harold Payne at www.positivemusic.com