



# George Banton

George Banton, Gemini, was born in the Parish of St.Elizabeth, Jamaica, West Indies. During his early childhood, George sang in his hometown church choir at the United Brethren In Christ Church. Later, he started singing solo in numerous churches throughout the island, including the Church of God of Prophecy, the New Testament Church of God, and the Santa Cruz Baptist Church, among others.

At the age 18, George learned to play the guitar and formed his own Gospel group, "The Hope Brothers". After two years, George left the Hope Brothers and moved to Kingston.

In 1970, he decided to venture into a different arena; he wrote and produced a Reggae tune called "I'm a Lonely Boy". The song did not make the chart. He realized his strength was in gospel and Soul music. One night while in concert at an Omara Rd Church, Mr. Lawrence, the director of the "Gospel Light Band" - the number one gospel group in the country- auditioned George and immediately contracted him to join the group. This was the turning point in George's Life.

In 1972, George was involved with two groups that emerged from the split of the Gospel Light Band. First, "The Insight Gospel Group", and ultimately "The Grace Thrillers", where he became lead singer.

In 1973, the Grace Thrillers recorded their first Gospel hit, "Too Late Shall be Your Cry", which was written by George, and it became the number one Gospel hit song in the country. The group went on to record five additional singles, and made another hit with "It's Just About Time".

In 1974, the Grace Thrillers produced their first Gospel album called "I've Got a Love", which was released through the Caribbean, Canada, Europe, and the USA. In that year, George continued to sing with both groups until 1976, when he migrated to Canada.

Upon his arrival in Canada, George started on the same course. He donated his time and the entire proceeds from his concerts to numerous church charities.

In 1977, George formed a 7-piece Gospel band called "The Bantons". The group recorded and released their first single, called "Glory to his Name" on the Love Light Label. Unfortunately, the group dissolved in 1980.

George decided to take a new lease on life after overcoming many emotional trials in his personal relationships. Through this, his cousin, Ronnie Williams suggested that he record "Faithful and True", and R&B song that perfectly suited his situation. Initially, Banton hesitated to cross-over, torn by his devotion to serve god and to sing Gospel Music exclusively.

"Faithful and True", George Banton's first departure from Gospel music, stayed at #1 on the Canadian Charts for 10 weeks in 1981. Many of the lyrics in the song relate closely to Christian themes, and to his surprise, the gospel overtones of the recording attributed greatly to its success.

Up until the early 90's, George experienced international success with his departure from Gospel music,

releasing 9 albums and being honored with two Juno nominations. But George was still not satisfied. He knew that his true calling was to serve god. During his departure from Gospel music, he maintained his religious beliefs and standards, applying them to the material he chose, the venues he performed, and the life he led.

One night, a revelation came to him as he slept. He dreamt he was in his home town of Burnt Savana, St.Elizabeth, on the Island of Jamaica, visiting with his friends and family. A crazy old Woman approached them, with a strong warning for George. A warning from God. He was to turn his life around, he was to "pick up the cross" and follow the Lord. Since that defining moment, George Banton realized that the Lord has called him to do His work.

Amid criticism and speculation, George marked his return to Gospel music by recording "Jesus is Everything to Me". This, along with his second come-back album, "Oh How Sweet it is to Walk with Jesus ( A tribute to his mother )", George has experienced renewed success as a Gospel singer that is totally committed to Gospel music.

George is thankful to the Lord for sheltering him through the years, and for giving him another chance to live FOR HIM.

Biography by Neil Burke