

Mp3 Nicki Richards - Nicki



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Funky R&B delivered to the masses by a new master. A Diva for a new decade. With all-star special guests (Tower Of Power, Lenny White, Marcus Miller, Will Lee, Joe Sample), "Nicki" fuses powerful songwriting with fresh vision and timeless R&B grooves. 17 MP3 Songs in this album (75:31) ! Related styles: URBAN/R&B: R&B Pop Crossover, URBAN/R&B: Traditional R&B People who are interested in Chaka Khan Alicia Keys Beyonc should consider this download. Details: Nicki Richards is the real deal - a world class singer, songwriter, producer, arranger and performer who brings the sizzle and the thrill back to that rarified realm known as "music beyond category." Born into a household rich in jazz and the gospel of the Primitive Baptist Church, yet raised on the radio of the 70s and 80s - when airwaves overflowed with amazing R&B, rock, pop and dance music - diva Richards delivers a dizzyingly eclectic musical palette to your eardrums. Every composition is hers and she arranged them all in her living room laboratory of beat banks, keyboards, computers and microphones. Nicki Richards' long-awaited new album is simply titled, Nicki - 17 songs for the 17 years she's been away since her 1991 debut Naked (To the World). It's 76 mind-blowing minutes of the hippest trip in the galaxies aboard Starship Nicki, with guest stars bassists Marcus Miller, Will Lee and Victor Bailey, pianist Joe Sample, the legendary Tower of Power Horns, gargantuan drummer Dennis Chambers, harmonica maverick Gregoire Maret, guitarists Ciro, Sherrod Barnes and Monte Pittman, a sprawling A-list of singers that includes Lisa Fischer, Cindy Mizelle and Nicki's mom Donna Blackmon, and Nicki's rock steady co-producer, mentor and drummer, Mr. Lenny White (of Return to Forever and Twennynine fame). "SHOCK-A-LOCK-A!" Her sophomore CD reflects not only the sounds of her most lasting influences, but how their timeless masterpieces assisted Nicki in sculpting signature statements all her own. To listen to "I Have Loved You Always" is to imagine Stevie Wonder reconstructing Joni Mitchell's "Two Grey Rooms" while ensconced somewhere deep in the

Spanish countryside. Listening to "That Ain't Right" puts you in the mind of Prince teasing, "Dig if you will the picture of Sly Stone having his way with Percy Mayfield's 'Please Send Me Someone to Love.'" The ego strokin Say What finds Nicki recalling nightclub glory days over the beat of Taana Gardner's bedrock Heartbeat groove with a mid-song break straight out of Miles Davis So What. And if you fantasized about what Nicki's CD opener "Let's Dance" might taste like, it would be Tom Browne's "Funkin' for Jamaica" and George Duke's "Reach For It" blended over Krush Groove'd ice with an extract of the GAP Band's supremely chocolaty "Shake." Sip at your own New York funk-fortified risk! The answer to the obvious first question of why has it been so long since we've heard from Darling Nicki is an involved one. Though her debut album was miles ahead of almost every "R&B" CD out at the time, record company turmoil took an unfortunate toll on Nicki the artist, yet freed her up to make an outstanding living as an in-demand A-list session and touring singer for the likes of Tina Turner, Michael Jackson, Mick Jagger, Celine Dion, Mary J. Blige, Lenny Kravitz, Frankie Knuckles, LL Cool J, Anastacia and the Reverend Al Green, to name just a few heavyweights. She married and divorced, saw the world, and lived and loved enough for two lifetimes - memories that fuel her heavily autobiographical Nicki CD...because the artist within her never slept. "I was living life and figuring out how to make and enjoy music again without someone having the authority to tell me, 'No, you can't do that,'" Nicki shares. "I wanted to express and create music - my own or anyone else's - in a way that was powerful, positive and productive. I was still writing and selling songs to publishers, but as far as me putting it out there, things had just changed." It was while on the road with Madonna - singing backup with Donna Delory - that Nicki realized she missed the frontline more than she dared admit. "Donna had recorded a CD and was supporting it with gigs while we were on the road. I thought, 'I used to do that...' I'd gotten so caught up in studio work and supporting other artists. It was time for me to turn that focus back on myself. It took me another year before I could pull it together - really carve out the time. Honestly, I also had a little fear. The industry has changed so much... But what I realize now is that it has actually opened up for the better. Artists have less to lose now. So I decided to just go for it!" That meant holing up in her home studio, sacrificing bright sunny days for a sometimes painful but ultimately cathartic stretch of soul searching and soul-baring. Out poured songs about longing for that one supreme love for the ages, cleansing paeans for clarity and understanding, and anthem-like prayers for humanity following both 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina. Most important were the songs that found her turning a personal corner to manifest change within herself. "I was ready to take the bull by the horns

on all fronts," Nicki says, "and pull my life in a different direction. At first I was going to title the album Things Are Different Now, but it was too much of a mouthful." Highlights abound on the lady's new Nicki collection - where thoughtful lyrics meet sophisticated musicality with visceral and engaging results. Take Check Yourself, a hunk of burnin' Knee Deep funk on which Nicki forthrightly tells a man to change his evil ways. I was making changes in my life, so I was calling people out on theirs as well, Nicki laughs! This song showcases an electrifying turn by the Tower of Power Horns, arranged by Tom Bones Malone - a dream come true for the girl who grew up devouring the liner notes and credits of all the albums she bought, vowing to one day work with all of the greats herself. We cut that at Clinton Studios and their sound just filled the place, she says. It was taking over the record in the best kind of way. Tom gave those guys some tricky parts to play and they straight handled it! It took me right back to being a kid with my vinyl. And they were so respectful of me and what I'd brought to the table. We had a blast - laughed the entire day - then we all went out to dinner at Serafinasthe best! The latter half of Nicki Richards Nicki is a suite of songs expressing the loneliness and frustration of longing for a love you know is attainable yet just out of reach. On the spacey Alpha Centauri, Nicki taps into her fascinations with astronomy, science fiction and the dubiousness of on-line communication to get this message across (with Victor Bailey's fretless bass masterfully telegraphing that unbearable lightness of forlornness). Ditto for Say the Words, the interlude In Bed and Happening to Me Again in which love is a heart-wrenching series of memories and fantasies recalled in lines of vividly aching poetry such as, my body has betrayed me your kisses fall, they're pouring down like rain. The most mesmerizing of these pieces is the intergalactic sensuality of Parallel Universe, crafted by Ms. Richards with a soundtrack ladled right out of the Milky Way, featuring impassioned drumming by Lenny White and delicate piano strokes by Joe Sample - another personal coup. One of the first records I bought with my own money at a shopping mall record store was Carmel by Joe Sample, Nicki states, almost giddy with delight. When Lenny asked me about a dream list of musicians for my album, Joe was at the top. As fate would have it, at a hotel in L.A., Lenny ran smack into Joe who said it would be o.k. for me to call him. I sent him the music, he loved it and it was on! The encounter had both poignant and hilarious results. Joe made the time to go to his home and play the parts on his beautiful Steinway, Nicki continues. But he also cursed me out because the print on the original sheet music I sent was too small for him to read. He was like, Don't you know I'm an old man? I had to put my glasses on to see the blankity-blank thing! At that moment I thought, I'm getting cursed out

by Joe Sample right now about my music COOL! What an honor it was for me to even be on his radar I am so grateful to have the acceptance of these incredible musicians. Nicki earned that respect over the years among the top and notoriously tough crop of New York's finest with her professionalism, hunger, drive, talent and vision all of which are on awesome display in another epic highlight from Nicki, titled Lawdy. Inspired by painful losses sustained from Hurricane Katrina, the bluesy and prayerful Lawdy finds Nicki melding a churchy choir and organ with backwoods elements of shot glass slide guitar to create the righteous ambiance. Lawdy took Nicki back to her roots in more ways than one. When Katrina happened, she says softly, I had cousins, aunts and uncles who were all displaced, their houses destroyed. And I lost my grandfather. He went from wandering around the Dome for three days getting sicker and sicker to ending up in an Alabama hospital where they mixed up his medicines. I understand the medics were overwhelmed and did the best that they could, but we lost him. Then we had problems burying him. It was all just a mess. The idea behind Lawdy is that terrible things happen, but we find another kind of strength to pick ourselves up. It's a tribute to the spirit of the people of New Orleans. As the daughter of a high-ranking African American Naval officer, Nicki lived in places all over the world from Washington, D.C. and California to Hawaii and Pensacola. All that moving around was daunting but provided Nicki with priceless insights into people that shaped the way she sees the world. Those musings are found in *Belong*, loping along on a bassy Bootsy Collins-inspired groove. Every few years, I was always the new kid having to figure out how to make new friends, Nicki remembers. There was always something that set me apart. Because I was placing in honors classes and gifted programs, I skipped a grade. I'd be the youngest one in the class or the shortest one. I've had this chest since I was 7, so I was sticking out in that way, too! And a lot of times I was the only Black one. So I was a different kid...a nerd who wound up gravitating to other smart kids out on the fringes. And as we got older, we became the music people and the theater people. I've always had tolerance and compassion for people who were different. And I was constantly trying to find that Utopian society where we could all accept each other for who we are. The playlist of my life back then was songs like *Uptown* by Prince and *Everybody* by Madonna. To this day I'm still trying to bring everyone together in one way or another. That message rings in the pulsating club anthem *Bring the Love*, a concept that came to Nicki after serving jury duty. I was on a case that split the room straight down the middle, she shares, divided by all the things that so-called separate us - classism, racism and sexism. It got pretty heated. It astonished me, in this time, how biased people still can be.

Nicki came up with a song in the vein of one of her all-time favorite singers, Chaka Khan, even going so far as to hire her friend Will Lee to recreate the bass line he laid down on her hit *I'm Every Woman*. And just like Chaka, Nicki dispatches her urgent missive with immediacy and soul-fire. "Bring the love / And let it ease the situation / There's no room for hating on me / When you don't even know me / Bring the love / We need much more than tolerating / This is our wake up / Love's what you make it / I want you to show me / Bring the love..." ***** The depth of Nicki Richards' artistry stems from her indigenously musical family. Her mother Donna Blackmon is a professional singer who frequently sang with Cannonball Adderley a ringer for Nancy Wilson who subbed on dates that the superstar could not make with the alto sax giant. Nicki's grandmother, Lurlean Blackmon is a pianist and organist who was the choir director for five Primitive Baptist churches. Nicki's baby brother Philip Richards is a singer/musician in his own right who graces several songs on Nicki and has his own rock band, Status Joe. And Nicki's father Harry Richards, while not a musician, had an incredibly eclectic taste in music (Ahmad Jamal, Rare Earth, WAR, John Coltrane, America, etc.) that shaped Nicki's taste as well. Nicki's father also is at the core of her insatiable drive toward excellence. Nicki states, He always expected me to be more. When it came to school work, he'd say, B isn't going to make it. Where is the A? Then I'd bring home an A+ and he'd say, Well, that's exactly what I expected. What else you got for me? It's never ending and that's what makes me tick. I know I'm worthy, regardless, but deep down I'm still that girl looking for daddy's approval. Nicki's mother had her doing commercials when she was 5. She has also done some theatre and movies, but making music is her passion. As a teenager, she soaked up the club scene in New York, befriending musicians such as Cornell Dupree, Steve Gadd, Jaco Pastorius, Steve Jordan, Charley Drayton, Hiram Bullock and Richard Tee. The latter two were especially nurturing and protective of the pretty, young aspiring musician - taking her budding artistry very seriously. Many of them have passed on now, but Nicki remembers them with the utmost respect and love, offering, They were like my family. It is drummer Lenny White, however, who became the big brother Nicki never had. Beat fiend that she is, the connoisseur was most impressed with his astoundingly diverse resume. The two began a very special relationship. I've been working with Lenny for over 20 years, Nicki marvels. He's always encouraging me never wanting me to be stifled. I call the role Lenny plays in my life *The Contrarian*." I'll have an idea and he'll shoot it down, challenging me to either stand behind it or make it better. And when I assumed I would have to start looking around for producers to work with me on this album since that's the way the

game was played the first time I came out Lenny is the one who reminded me, No, its a new ballgame now. You make your record your way. Ms. Richards first graced us back in 1991 with the CD Naked (To the World) - a dynamic debut of purposed and poetic aural alchemy that left the musically astute scratching their heads thinking, "Where did this lil' bad ass babe with the bangin' beats come from?" Atlantic Records co-founding President Ahmet Ertegun personally inked Nicki to the company tersely declaring, I signed Aretha Franklin and I signed Led Zeppelin. Now Im signing you! By all accounts, Nicki delivered a very impressive record. From unforgettable covers of Seals Crofts Summer Breeze and the Isley Brothers' "Voyage to Atlantis" (which whisked you mentally down to its watery depths), to a wistful reflection on a love affair in "Paris" (penned by the sublime yet underrated Tina Harris), to one of the sexiest slices of femme fatale funk in the 90s ("Naked"), Nicki's Naked (To the World) is now a collectible that folks steady hit up E-Bay to cop. But behind the scenes drama at then-transitioning Atlantic compromised the promotion of Naked. Disheartened, Nicki opted out of her contract and concentrated on the lucrative super side-woman scene. Though Nicki's new album reflects the point of view of an older and wiser woman with the depth of its themes and lyrics, the lady has always expressed concern for the ways of the world as far back as first-album songs like New Days of Rage and Whats Going On. However, she always has a few sexy, funky joints up her satin sleeves. In fact, she is the undisputed queen of songs about lustful obsession, proven by I Wont Let Go from Naked (on which she also busted an unforgettable rap) and on Nicki with the brash and bold "I'm Gon' Be With You." I just needed that song to be nasty cuz thats how I was feeling, Nicki confesses, channeling her inner hussy. I found an old piece of metal pipe and made that my snare sound because I needed it to be just raw, wrong and basic! Then I got Gregoire Maret (a Swiss harmonica player whos worked with everyone from Cassandra Wilson and Marcus Miller to Pat Metheny and Herbie Hancock) to blow on it. His harmonica just made it black, country and wonderful! Its a refreshing, erotically candid standout of the Nicki album that peels back yet another layer of the fun, alluring and occasionally reckless woman that the once bookish nerd girl has blossomed into. Nowadays rockin concerts with Madonna - Nicki fiercely leads the churchy closing vamp of Like a Prayer before crowds of 85,000 to 90,000 people! Yet at the heart of Nicki the album is how thankful she is for all she has experienced- the joy and the pain. Nicki closes Nicki with a breathtaking arrangement of the Serenity Prayer, setting the well-known words to music and layered vocal harmonies that conclude her ambitious sophomore statement on a cloud of heavenly chord progressions. She conceived this piece

back in 2001BEFORE September 11 a day that changed the world and instigated profound atonement in Nicki Richards. Some friends and I were driving in a van to a performance in New Jersey, Nicki remembers. We passed the Twin Towers around 9:30 and joked about the skyline as we sipped our morning coffee. By the time we got to Princeton, the first plane hit. We thought What a tragic accident. Let's figure out how to get ourselves back together so we'll be able to perform. Moments later, the second plane hit and we knew it was no accident. Once we were able to get back into New York, I knew I had to contribute and serve. Any opportunity I had to sing to bring awareness, I was there - "The Concert for New York" and "The Concert for Heroes. The next thing I knew I had to do was to live as WELL and as HARD as I could. As it happened, I got called for a tour of Europe. People thought I was bananas for getting on anyone's plane, but I said, If I'm goin' out, I'm gonna go out singing my heart out or on my way somewhere to sing my heart out. I'm going to go to all these countries and hack up the language, fall in love with inappropriate people, eat lots of great international food and live as blissfully as possible. I vowed to live in the moment - going for it with my music and connecting with people. And I'm still doing that, Nicki concludes. I am grateful every single day. Every step I take, I am in active prayer. - A. Scott Galloway

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