

Blues Brother

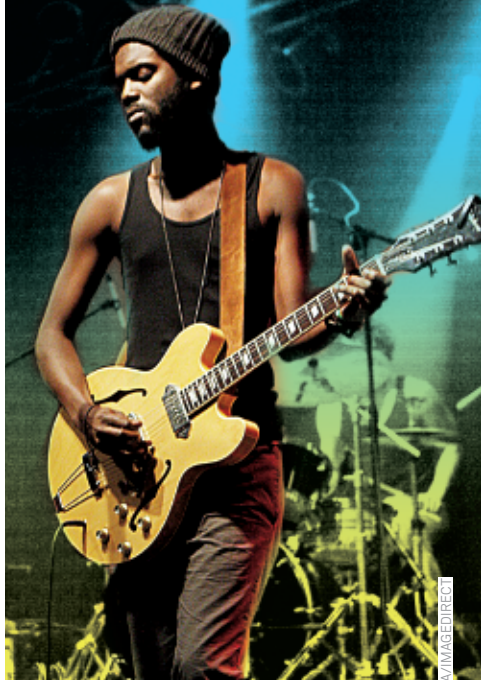
Texas soul man *Gary Clark Jr.* moves to his own tune

—by Bonsu Thompson

THE MULTI-TALENTS of new guitar-meets-vocal sensation Gary Clark Jr. can easily be rooted back to the encouraging elders in his childhood. Wise words bestowed upon the Austin, TX youth weren't always sugary, but unequivocally nutritious. While only a sixth grader—so advanced at his craft he was allowed to strum publicly with the local musicians—a young Clark was advised to diversify. “My mom was like, ‘If you can play out there for those sinners drinking on Sixth Street, you can play for the church,’” he recalls. “So I started playing there as well.”

Later in high school, while juggling a Jimi Hendrix jones, and hoop dreams, the lanky wonder was presented with his greatest ultimatum. A basketball coach, with peaked frustration at Clark for missing games for gigs, demanded he decide between b-ball and “that damn rock ‘n’ roll.” He didn’t string the coach along.

Today the fruits of Clark’s decision



are a Warner Bros. record contract, a buzzing EP, *Bright Lights*, with a title track tapped by ESPN’s 2012 NFL Draft for a Nas-featured remix, and a full-length debut, *Blak and Blu* (out now). And Clark promises his fans more for their buck. “It’s everything that got me into music and everything I wanna do musically with my story over it,” he says before addressing into which box his artistry falls. “When people ask, I say it’s blues, soul and rock ‘n’ roll. But when you think about it, it’s really just soul music.”



TERRENCE JENNINGS/PICTUREGROUP/AP IMAGES; FRANK MICELOTTA/IMAGEDIRECT

WHAT WE'RE WATCHING > *Celebrity Crime Files*, Mondays, 10pm ET on TVOne. This new docu-series is already generating tons of buzz for its in-depth coverage of heinous acts in Black Hollywood. Don't miss this week's episode, which investigates the untimely death of hip-hop icon, Jam Master Jay.