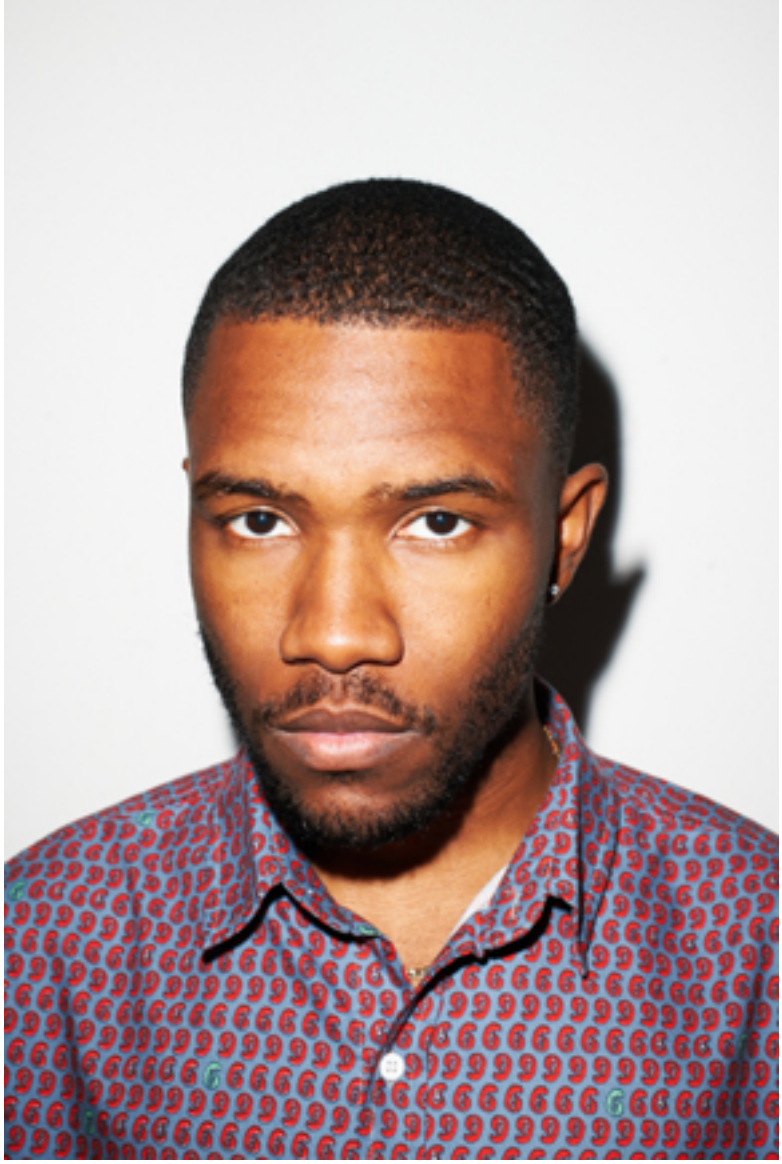
Written by Dom Minor, Music Critic
Wednesday, 18 July 2012 15:17



Follow him on Twitter and you'll be adding to one of his 1,000,000 plus followers. Skim his Wikipedia page and you'll see his affiliation with one of the hottest up and coming hip-hop minds of today's youth, Tyler the Creator as well hip-hop collective, OFWKGTA (Odd Future Wolf Gang Kill Them All), dubbed the next Wu-Tang Clan. He's featured on the critically acclaimed album Watch the Throne, arguably the most important hip-hop record of 2011. He's worked with platinum stars such as Beyoncé, Justin Bieber, Kanye West, Jay-Z, and Pharell to name a few.

On Wed., July 4, rising R&B star Breaux, who goes by the moniker Frank Ocean, posted a letter via his Tumblr page, revealing his previous love for a man. What he has not done is simply claimed an identity or taken the cliché route of "outing" himself. Instead he used the Internet as a platform to share a letter of recollection of past feelings.

The sexual fluidity of his music works hand-in-hand with his moving confession. Though he has

not come forward with a title for his sexuality, in a sense he has delivered the heaviest blow on the wall of repression built by hatred, and anti-homosexuality in urban music. This as well as other artists publicly asking for tolerance of the gay community, is a huge step for our world.

Here is a passage from his letter:
"4 summers ago, I met somebody. I was 19 years old. He was too. We spent that summer, and the summer after, together. Everyday almost. And on the days we were together, time would glide. Most of the day I'd see him, and his smile. I'd hear his conversation and his silence. Until it was time to sleep. Sleep I would often share with him. By the time I realized (sic) I was in love, it was malignant. It was hopeless. There was no escaping, no negotiating with the feeling. No choice. It was my first love. It changed my life."

What could this mean, particularly to urban music? It could break the barriers of almost required misogyny. He is the Elton John of hip-hop and R&B. Before, idols such as Michael Jackson and Prince were praised in the urban community obviously for their talent.

Yet, a defense for their androgynous and even feminine styles was undoubtedly the number of women these artists attracted. Even possible attraction to men has been shucked aside and disregarded. Frank is the first to openly direct lyrics of love without ambiguity to a man. In his song "Forest Gump" he sings:

My fingertips, and my lips, they burn
From the cigarettes
Forrest Gump, you run my mind boy
Running on my mind boy
Forrest blues

I remember you
If this is love, I know it's true
I won't Forget you (you)
(oh you you) it's for you Forrest

Ocean's proclamation drove Chely Wright, country music star and one of the first gay county singers to announce it to the public world, to tears. She herself can attest to the backlash of a community after coming out of the closet. In an interview with TMZ she notes that her sales have dropped dramatically since her revealing she is gay.

Even rapper Lil B used music as a platform to send an anti-homophobic message to the world of hip-hop when he released his album entitled, "I'm Gay". Not gay himself; he professed the controversial title simply referred to the original meaning of the word, "happy". He discussed with CNN that he was trying to spread a message of positivity and tolerance. Although he is often disregarded as a serious contributor to hip-hop, the message he was trying to provide was as serious as can be.

Despite the potential pitfall his career could take revealing this secret, Ocean let revelation go in close proximity of his highly anticipated album "Channel Orange" being dropped. Could it be a publicity stunt? Hopefully not, but whether or not this declamation has any link to his album sales, it is undoubtedly courageous to make such a statement public. The singer has received cosigns from Jay-Z, Andre 3000, Beyoncé, Russell Simmons, members of his affiliated collective OFWGKTA, as well as GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) and Brad Wete, writer for Complex magazine who wrote, "It's 2012 now. Our country is marching forward to the point where coming out of the closet should be no big deal."

In urban music we still have a ways to go before orientations of all kind are treated and respected equally, but this is a huge step in that direction. So cheers to Mr. Ocean. Dear Frank, thank you for your courage, you may have just changed music forever.

-To see the letter's original post visit: http://frankocean.tumblr.com/post/26473798723

http://frankocean.tumblr.com/post/26885717440/channelorange

Frank Ocean's letter entitled "Thank You's":
"Whoever you are, wherever you are… I'm starting to think we are a lot alike. Human beings spinning on blackness. All wanting to be seen, touched, heard, paid attention to. My loved ones

are everything to me here. In the last year or 3, I've screamed at my creator. Screamed at clouds in the sky. For some explanation. Mercy maybe. For peace of mind to rain like manna somehow. 4 summers ago, I met somebody. I was 19 years old. He was too. We spent that summer and the summer after, together. Everyday almost. And on the days we were together, time would glide. Most of the day I'd see him, and his smile. I'd hear his conversation and his silence.. Until it was time to sleep. Sleep I would often share with him. By the time I realized I was in love, it was malignant. It was hopeless. There was no escaping. No negotiating with the feeling. No choice. It was my first love. It changed my life. Back then, my mind would wander to the women I had been with. The ones I cared for and thought I was in love with. I reminisced about the sentimental songs I enjoyed when I was a teenager. The ones I played when I experienced a girl too quickly. Imagine being thrown from a plane. I wasn't in a plane though. I was in a Nissan Maxima. The same car I packed up with bags and drove to Los Angeles in. I sat there and told my friend how I felt. I wept as the words left my mouth. I grieved for them, know I could never take them back for myself. He patted my back. He said kind things. He did his best, but he wouldn't admit the same. He had to go back inside soon. I was late and his girlfriend was waiting for him upstairs. He wouldn't tell me the truth about his feelings for me for another 3 years. I felt like I'd only imagined reciprocity for years. Now imagine being thrown from a cliff. No. I wasn't on a cliff. I was still in my car telling myself it was gonna be fine and to take deep breaths. I took the breaths and carried on. I kept up a peculiar friendship with him because I couldn't imagine keeping up my life without him. I struggled to master myself and my emotions. I wasn't always successful. The dance went on.. I kept the rhythm for several summers after. It's winter now. I'm typing this on a plane back to Los Angeles from New Orleans. I flew home for another marred Christmas. I have a windowseat. It's December 27, 2011. By now, I've written two albums. This being the second. I wrote to keep myself busy and sane. I wanted to create worlds that were rosier than mine. I tried to channel overwhelming emotions. I'm surprised at how far all of it has taken me. Before writing this, I'd told some people my story. I'm sure these people kept me alive. Kept me safe… sincerely. These are the folks I wanna thank from the floor of my heart. Everyone of you knows who you are.. Great humans. Probably angels. I don't know what happens now, and that's alright. I don't have any secrets I need kept anymore. There's probably some small shit still, but you know what I mean. I was never alone, as much as I felt like it.. As much as I still do sometimes. I never was. I don't think I ever could be. Thanks. To my first love, I'm grateful for you. Grateful that even though it wasn't what I had hoped for and even though it was never enough, it was. Some things never are…And we were. I won't forget you. I won't forget the summer. I'll remember who I was when I met you. I'll remember who you were and how we both changed and stayed the same. I've never had more respect for life and living than I have right now. Maybe it takes a near death experience to feel alive. Thanks. To my mother, you raised me strong. I know I'm only brave because you were first…So thank you. All of you. For everything good. I feel like a free man. If I listen closely, I can hear the sky falling too.
Frank
Dom can be reached at dom@insightnews.com or Twitter: www.twitter.com/tkfayt