

# SOUL IN THE HOLE

FIVE FUTURE R&B STARS

WORDS **JESSE SERWER**

ADDITIONAL REPORTING **QIMMAH SAAFIR AND CLOVER HOPE**



## Dondria a.k.a. Phatfffat

**GOV'T NAME:** Dondria Nicole Fields

**AGE:** 21

**REPPIN':** Sachse, Texas

**NOTABLE RELEASES:** *Dondria vs. Phatfffat*, 2008

**CURRENTLY WORKING ON:** promoting *Dondria vs. Phatfffat*

**LABEL:** So So Def

**SOUNDS LIKE:** 702 meets Ciara

**SIDE HUSTLES:** None

**THE FUTURE OF R&B IS...** "the past. Soulful. It'll be *back* to the future."



## Jazmine Sullivan

**GOV'T NAME:** Jazmine Sullivan

**AGE:** 21

**REPPIN':** Philadelphia

**NOTABLE RELEASES:** Guest vocals on Fantasia's "Free Yourself," 2004, and Nas's "Make the World Go Round," 2008; debut album *Fearless*, 2008

**CURRENTLY WORKING ON:** promoting *Fearless*

**LABEL:** J Records

**SOUNDS LIKE:** Lauryn Hill meets Mary J. Blige

**SIDE HUSTLES:** Songwriting for Christina Milian ("Say I," "Twisted," 2006)

**THE FUTURE OF R&B IS...** "I feel like pure classic R&B music is becoming extinct. As people branch out more and experiment with their sound, R&B will evolve into something else, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. But we can't forget about our roots, which allowed us to experiment in the first place."



## Karina

**GOV'T NAME:** Karina Pasion

**AGE:** 17

**REPPIN':** New York City

**NOTABLE RELEASES:** *First Love*, 2008

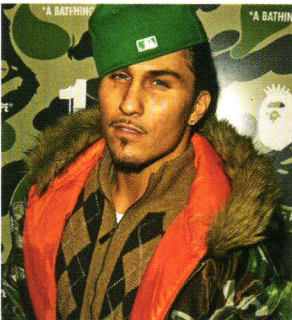
**CURRENTLY WORKING ON:** As-yet-untitled sophomore album, scheduled for 2009

**LABEL:** Def Jam

**SOUNDS LIKE:** Alicia Keys meets Jennifer Hudson

**SIDE HUSTLE:** Finishing up her senior year at NYC's Professional Performing Arts School

**THE FUTURE OF R&B IS...** "going back to *real* R&B, with more music and more singing, especially with the younger generation."



## Avery Storm

**GOV'T NAME:** Ralph Di Stasio **AGE:** 28

**REPPIN':** Fair Lawn, New Jersey

**NOTABLE RELEASES:** Guest vocals on Murphy Lee's "I Better Go," 2003, The Notorious B.I.G.'s "Nasty Girl" (feat. Diddy, Nelly and Jagged Edge), 2006, and Rick Ross's "Here I Am" (feat. Nelly), 2008; his own single "Terrified" (feat. Jadakiss), 2008

**CURRENTLY WORKING ON:** Appearances on upcoming material from Nelly, Jadakiss, Carol City Cartel and Rick Ross; his debut album, *Shotgun Love*, due early 2009

**LABEL:** Derry Entertainment/Universal

**SOUNDS LIKE:** Justin Timberlake meets Bobby Valentino

**SIDE HUSTLES:** Handling his Internet promotions via MySpace and YouTube, drumming, production

**THE FUTURE OF R&B IS...** "yet to be determined but carries an undeniable legacy."

DONDRIA: JOHN RICARD; SULLIVAN: WARWICK SAINT; KARINA: FREDERIC RESHEW; AVERY STORM: MAT SZWAJKOS/GETTY IMAGES

# Keri Hilson

Keri Hilson's ascension has nothing to do with luck. More than just her sultry hooks (that's her singing on Timbaland's "The Way I Are" and Nas's "Hero") and model-gorgeous looks (that's her seducing Usher in his "Love in This Club" video), the hardworking Atlanta native accumulated songwriting credits for Ludacris, Usher, Mary J. Blige, Ciara, the Pussycat Dolls and Britney Spears, all before she turned 25.

This year, Hilson, who is signed through a joint venture with Polow Da Don's Zone 4 label, Timbaland's Mosley Music Group and Interscope Records, takes center stage

herself with her long-delayed solo album, *In a Perfect World*. "I've been singing since I could remember," Hilson says. "Kids used to call me Keri-oke, because I was always humming or singing a song." Arranging songs, cutting vocals and engineering sessions since her teenage years, Hilson scored her first major feature when she sang on Xzibit's "Hey Now (Mean Muggin)," from 2004's *Weapons of Mass Destruction*. 2007 proved to be her breakout year, as she appeared on four songs from Timbaland's million-selling *Shock Value* album, including the No. 1

pop hit "The Way I Are," as well as Rich Boy's "Good Things." While she continues to make key guest appearances on singles like Chris Brown's "Superhuman," it's her own songs, like "Energy" and "Turnin' Me On," that have shot her to the top of the R&B to-watch list.

"You've heard my writing through other artists as vessels... Now the emotions are all from *my head*," she says of *In a Perfect World*, which features appearances from Lil Wayne, R. Kelly and Timbaland, among others. "As an artist, I'm trying to connect my emotions and things that go on every day with the music I put out."