

Angie Stone – Dream (2015)

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01 – Dollar Bill 03:15 02 – Begin Again 04:03 03 – Clothes Don't Make A Man 02:37 04 – Magnet 04:07 05 – Dream 03:29 06 – 2 Bad Habits 03:57 07 – Quits 03:12 08 – Think It Over 04:22 09 – Forget About Me 03:42 10 – Didn't Break Me 03:51

Angie Stone left the reality series R&B Divas after the revelation that her then boyfriend/manager was having an affair with one of the show's crew members, and an allegedly violent altercation with her daughter made headlines and had her contemplating leaving music altogether, but if there's one thing to know about her, besides that she's one of the finest and most revered voices in modern soul, it's that Angie Stone is a survivor.

Resiliency has played a key theme in her best work, and in the nearly 40 years that she's been in the game (as a member of pioneering female hip-hop trio the Sequence, as vocalist for Vertical Hold and on solo masterpieces Black Diamond and Mahogany Soul) Stone's always bounced back with consistently compelling material. More concise and focused than 2012's Rich Girl, Stone's seventh effort (and debut for Shanachie), Dream, touches on themes of personal and romantic renewal as well as tackling the rocky terrain of failed relationships. These certainly aren't new themes for Stone, yet with her robust alto and reverence to the soul music tradition as a sonic guide, they never seem redundant over the set's ten cuts.

Crisp and spunky opener "Dollar Bill" declares Stone's return with an irresistible groove reminiscent of Slave's "Watching You"; a duet with Dave Hollister on "Begin Again" is a heartfelt plea for reconciliation and a contender for duet of the year; the heart-rending "Magnet" has Stone lamenting her attraction to the wrong kind of partner, which is further examined on the confessional "2 Bad Habits." But again, this is Angie Stone, so when the album concludes with its best track, the neo-Motown bounce of the self-explanatory kiss off "Didn't Break Me," we know that she has truly overcome. Dream is another solid and empowering effort for Angie

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Stone. ---Shanachie, exclaim.ca

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