

Music

BLACK
HISTORY
JANUARY

Canada loses a music icon

Haydain Neale
(1970-2009)

— BY ERICA PHILLIPS —

THIS STORY WAS originally titled "Haydain Neale is Back" — it was supposed to focus on *SOULmate*, the latest musical effort from JACKSOAL, the band headed by frontman Haydain Neale.

Instead, this piece is a celebration of his life and music.

Haydain Neale, the lead singer of JACKSOAL died on Sunday, Nov. 22, of lung cancer at Mount Sinai Hospital, surrounded by his loved ones: wife Michaela, daughter Yarensa, brother-in-law Shawn Hudson and friends Davide DiBartono and Jennifer Hyland.

"Through all these challenges, Haydain's sense of humor and love of music were ever-present. He constantly brightened the room with his singing and his smile. His joyful presence and beautiful voice will be missed by us all," said Michaela in a press release.

In August 2007, Neale suffered a serious motor accident, which left the Hamilton native in a coma. The motorized scooter he was riding collided with a car in Toronto; the driver was charged. Concerned fans were relieved by his recovery. But it came as a shock for many when they also learned that Neale was quietly battling cancer the last few months.

That Haydain Neale continued as a joyful spirit right until the end can be heard in the music on his final album. The first single, "Lonesome Highway," is upbeat, brimming with hope and joy. At even, Neale's voice is rich, smooth, a throwback to the days of Sam Cook and Otis Redding, but still distinctly Haydain — our Haydain.

What many fans may not know is that *SOULmate* was started almost three years ago. "I named it for my wife Michaela," said Neale. "She never left my side. I owe a lot to her for her dedication to my health, well-being and for being my advocate. This record wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for her," Neale said, less than a week before his death.

Each track celebrates milestones belonging to the Neale family and one song in particular stirred strong emotions for the romantic front man.

"You're Beautiful" was very special to me," said Neale. "I wrote it for Michaela for our 10th anniversary. Just before my accident, we had a show in Hawaii and it was on the same day as our 10th anniversary. I gave her the song as the sun was going down through the big bay window overlooking the waves."

Neale left his fans with a legacy of love that can be felt in every line of every song that left his lips. *SOULmate* encapsulates the career of this iconic Canadian artist and seems to have hit the mark with his vision behind the album.

"Yes, there's a wiggle-your-hips kind of song in there, but mostly it's about hanging with your family and friends. I'm hoping people will surround themselves with the ones they truly love and just listen."

All proceeds from *SOULmate* will go to the Haydain Neale Family Trust. "The Haydain Neale Family Trust was started by Sony Music to help with the financial burden of this ongoing recovery treatment and therapy from the accident," says Erica Silver of Sony Music Entertainment Canada.

➔ FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HAYDAIN NEALE AND JACKSOAL, VISIT JACKSOAL.COM. TO SEND CONDOLENCES OR SHARE YOUR MEMORIES WITH THE NEALE FAMILY EMAIL: HAYDAINNEALEFAMILY@GMAIL.COM.

