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Formerly Incarcerated Bronx Singer Releases Album

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By ARIEL PACHECO



MS. SEELEY STRIKES a pose.
Photo courtesy of FREER Records

The Bronx R&B and Soul singer, who goes by the name, Ms. Seeley, whose legal name is Valerie Seeley, released a captivating and impactful, five-track EP called “SIGS On Seeley St.” on March 19. The album details the artist’s complex life journey, diving into various topics like surviving domestic violence, her 19-year prison sentence, the death of her 26-year-old son, and womanhood.

Seeley, now in her late sixties, is a lifelong Bronxite. She said she grew up all around the east and the west side of borough, but primarily lived on Jessup Avenue in Mt. Eden as a kid and teen. She now lives off the Grand Concourse by 196th Street on the border of Fordham Manor and Bedford Park.

The musician served 18 years of her 19-year sentence in prison for second-degree murder in a domestic violence incident involving her abusive partner. She was pardoned in 2016 by former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo. While in prison, her son, Eron, died. The track, “Eron” on her album is dedicated to him. Seeley said Eron was also incarcerated at the time of his death at Napanoch’s Eastern Correctional Facility in Ulster County, NY.

“While I was in there [in prison], I started my healing process,” Seeley told *Norwood News*. “I started writing different things about my life and how I felt, being a victim. Anything I felt, I just wrote it down,” she said.



The singer met Fury Young, founder of FREER Records, while she was incarcerated and began to send him a lot of her written work. FREER Records is a pioneer in the music industry in that it's the first record label in the country for prison-impacted musicians. The goal of Young and his colleagues is to elevate their musicians' careers while also giving them a platform to freely express their work for the world to hear.

"These songs are a way to get my story out, my trials and tribulations, all the stuff that I went through," said Seeley. "Hopefully when people hear the album they can relate because there's still a lot of domestic violence going on out here in the world today."

Seeley said some of the artists who have inspired her sound include Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, and Ray, Goodman and Brown. "SIGS On Seeley St." is produced by the co-executive director of FREER Records and musician, BL Shirelle. Seeley explained that the word "SIGS" in her album title is her way of paying homage to BL Shirelle's first single which had the same name. SIGS is an acronym for "Sh*t I Gotta Say."

The five tracks on "SIGS On Seeley St." are "Brownstone," "Death of an Angel," "Eron," "Queen," and "Winner's Circle." The album also features vocals from Dallas the Dove, who can be heard on all five songs and who also brings her own lived experiences to the music as a domestic violence survivor, who also lost a child.

A FREER Records representative said Dallas was living in a shelter for domestic violence survivors while recording the record. They said she also has a surviving daughter who is around 5 years old, and she dedicates her work on the album to her daughter.



MS. SEELEY POSES for a photo.
Photo courtesy of FREER Records

“SIGS On Seeley St.” was funded by the New York City Women’s Fund. Seeley has also been featured on numerous other FREER Records songs. “When people hear my album and they listen to the words [...], I guarantee that people are going to be able to relate to at least one or two songs,” she said.

Ms. Seeley’s music is available on all streaming platforms or through www.freerrecords.com. She also has a YouTube channel, SIGS on Seeley St.

**Sile Moloney contributed to this story.*

Editor’s Note: In an earlier version of this story, we had updated one of the paragraphs as we were informed there was an error relating to the 19-year sentence Ms. Seeley had been given. In fact, it was more of a misunderstanding. The story has since been further updated to reflect that Ms Seeley served 18 years of her 19-year sentence..