

What's after the hurt? Do you move on?

Fantasia is looking for fun with a sassy album of upbeat love songs

BY NEKESA MUMBI MOODY

NEW YORK — Few people, at 22 years old, merit an autobiography AND a biopic. But Fantasia, the former *American Idol* champ with the raspy, gospel-tinged voice of a weathered R&B veteran, has always been an old soul — and one who has had more life-changing experiences than some twice her age.

A single mom as a teen, she also endured sexual assault and learning difficulties before she became an overnight star two years ago — all of which she chronicled in her book, *Life is Not a Fairy Tale*, and this year's Lifetime movie, *The Fantasia Barrino Story*, in which she played herself.

But after reliving heartache in the public spotlight, and expressing it in song on her powerful debut album, 2004's *Free Yourself*, Fantasia is looking to having a little fun — like a lot of people her age. Her new self-titled album has more party jams and sassy love songs instead of heart-wrenching love ballads. She sat down recently for a Q&A session.

The Associated Press: How have you changed musically since the last record?

Fantasia: A lot of women loved that album. It was like their medicine. And that's because a lot of women were going through similar things. But my question is now to my fans and to the people who follow me and love to hear my music: What's after the hurt? Do you continue to be hurt, do you continue to sit around or do you pick up and move on? So that's what I want to let them know now, you pick up and you move on.

AP: You put yourself out there last year with a book and movie, and got criticism for what was revealed.



PAUL HAWTHORNE/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Singer Fantasia Barrino is turning her back on angst.

Fantasia: Whenever you do something you're going to get criticized. Somebody is going to have something to say, somebody is going to have their own opinion. But I always say to people, my main goal in putting my book and movie out was to encourage other young people who have been through the same thing. I want to put my story out there as a testimony.

AP: Did you always plan to play yourself in the role?

Fantasia: (Shakes her head.) They had called me and said, think about who you would like to play your part. ... I kept saying, Kimberly Elise, Kimberly Elise. And then they called me and they said, "No, you're going to play yourself," and I'm like, I don't know how to act! (Laughs.) I've never done movies. How? And that's when (film director) Ms. Debbie Allen started meeting with me. She brought a lot of things out of me that I didn't even

know that I had.

AP: Do you think you still get a boost from being a former *Idol* winner or has that dissipated?

Fantasia: I don't know because I still get a lot of *Idol* questions, I still get a lot of interviewers asking me about the *Idols*. I can't break away.

AP: Do you want to break away?

Fantasia: At first, I was like that, I'm gonna be honest, I was like I don't want to do nothing else about *Idol*. (But) you have to sit back and think sometimes because sometimes, you're moving so fast and you're so busy, you start to forget, and you start to forget that you could have been at home right now if it had not been for 65 million votes. Those people gave me the opportunity. So, I don't want to be looked at as just an *American Idol*, I want to be viewed as an artist ... but at the same time, never forget that.

Associated Press