

1B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Future in jazz sounds sunny for Sumter



SUNNY SUMTER

By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Cheryl "Sunny" Sumter's voice can make a cheap pair of loud speakers sound like a million bucks. It's that clear. It's that soothing. Fortunately, if you go to hear her Friday at the Afro-

American Cultural Center you won't have to listen to her through such speakers. But you will hear a voice that's clear and smooth.

Actually, you'll hear a lot of Phyllis Hyman, Sarah Vaughn and Ella Fitzgerald - all of whom inspired Sumter. Like those women, she's a true singer, able to tackle any song from Rodgers and

Hammerstein to Stevie Wonder.

But jazz is what you'll hear mostly.

"Although I enjoy performing various musical forms, jazz is my first love," Sumter said. "Its definition as an art form is deeply rooted in the African American tradition, with many doors of musical exploration from which a story can be told. In fact, much of my growth as an artist comes from exploring what's behind those doors."

Sumter's voice is knocking those doors down. For a beginning talent, she's drawn praise from a diverse group of giants. Jazz trumpeter Donald Byrd called her voice "rich," and said "she's laid back, passionate and very articulate."

Vanessa Rubin, an awesome jazz vocalist in her own right, agrees.

"I liked her projection and her ability to read the lyric...and the voice...she's been concentrating on tonality," Rubin said. "She has great potential and I look forward to seeing her on the rise."

Rubin met Sumter at a taping of Black Entertainment Television's "Jazz Discovery," on which Sumter got national exposure. She was a finalist on the program.

That's a high achievement for a woman who was told she shouldn't sing jazz.

"When I was 19, my voice teacher told me that I shouldn't sing jazz because it was for old folks," Sumter told The Hilltop, Howard University's newspaper.

Sumter is an alumna of Howard with a degree in

music and business. She left Howard briefly, trekking to New York to study vocalists first hand in jazz clubs.

Born in Washington, D.C., Sumter attended the Duke Ellington School of the Arts before attending Howard. She studied under Grady Tate, a jazz drummer and educator, at Howard.

Sumter has performed in Europe, headlining the Elba Island Jazz Festival in Italy. She's done much of her work in the D.C. area, performing at such venues as the Smithsonian Institution, Carter Barron Amphitheatre, Takoma Station, Georgia Brown, B Smith's at Union Station and Bethune Museum and Archives.

Sumter also opened for Hyman and has appeared with rising jazz stars Roy Hargrove and Antonio Hart.

It was Hargrove who gave Sumter some needed advice.

"I was singing but I didn't have any real respect for jazz as a true musical language," she told The Hilltop. "I'll never forget Roy Hargrove telling me, 'If you really want to be respected doing this music, you'll have to study it.'"

She has, and she's learned well.

Want to go?

Sunny Sumter will appear 7 p.m. tomorrow at the Afro-American Cultural Center, 401 N. Myers St. Tickets are \$10. For more ticket information, call (704) 842-8066.

Cover 2 Cover

Somebody Else's Child
Author: Terris McMahan Grimes
Penguin
\$6.99

By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST



Terris McMahan Grimes' mystery, "Somebody Else's Child," is - well - OK. It is never really a thriller, never really a mystery and unfortunately plays largely on stereotypes of African Americans, both those in the inner city as well as those who have "made it."

Theresa Galloway, our heroine, is an overweight buppie with an overly anxious mother, a dead neighbor and several homeless children. Sound a little contrived? Well, it is.

When Theresa's mother's neighbor is murdered, Theresa sets out to solve the case and figure out why the victim was so nervous about her missing family Bible. The Bible, of course, holds the key to the mystery, which may involve several prominent Los Angeles families.

Along the way, Galloway is sidetracked by drug deals, spousal abuse, child abuse, lecherous "friends" from high school and a couple of murders.

"Somebody Else's Child" marks McMahan-Grime's first effort. For a first novel, it is passable. McMahan-Grimes shows promise. Her writing style is good, her characters well-developed. Where the mystery falls short is plot. McMahan-Grimes tries to juggle too many plotlines and drops the ball on several. The ending is too convenient and will be predictable for most mystery enthusiasts.

"Somebody Else's Child" is the first installment in a series of mysteries to revolve around supersleuth Theresa Galloway. Galloway is a good character. She is intelligent, attractive and reluctantly falls into solving mysteries. She has all the makings of a strong center for the series. McMahan-Grimes has interesting characters to build on and is a good writer who needs to learn to follow her plot and not sidetrack too often. A sleuth can have only so many problems solving a mystery. Hopefully next time out her "mystery" will not leave the reader flat.

SOUNDS

By Winfred B. Cross

Maxwell
Maxwell's Urban Hang Suite
MUSZE, Sturat
Mattewman and P.M.,
producers
Columbia Records

☆☆☆☆ 1/2

I couldn't begin to tell you who Maxwell is. I can tell you he'll be a household word within the next few months, especially those houses that yearn for good r&b.

Maxwell's debut, auspiciously titled Maxwell's Urban Hang Suite is a monster CD filled with unbridled passion that brings up thoughts of Stevie, Michael, Marvin, Smokey and Symbol in their youth. He's borrowed liberally

Maxwell's debut is full of old-school vibe

from those artists, but he hasn't stolen a thing. His style - a laid-back '70s soul kind of thing - dominates what he's learned from his peers.

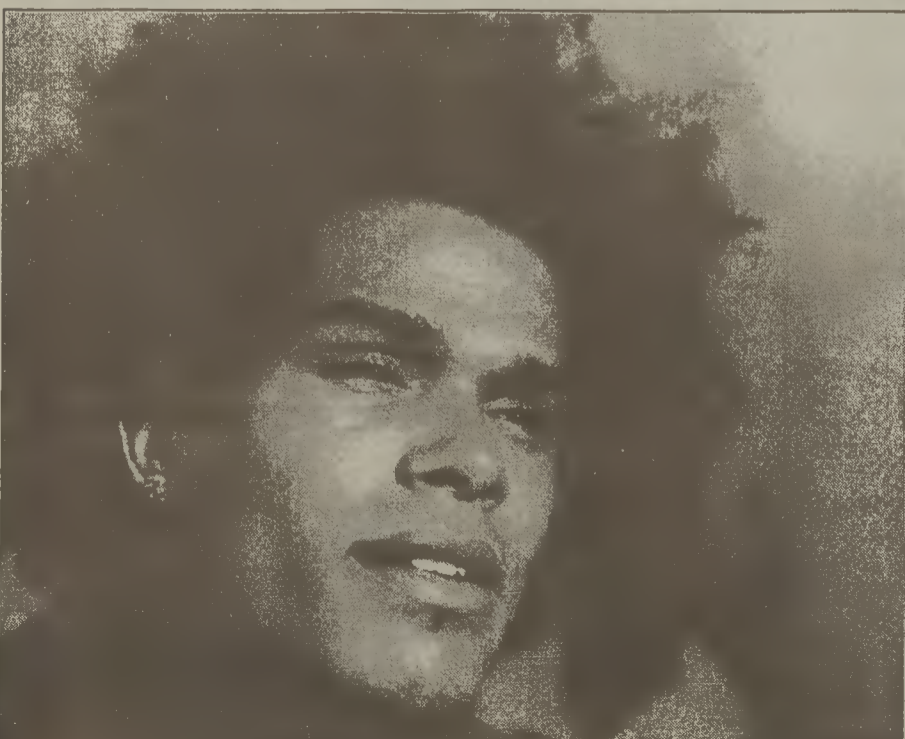
The entire CD sounds as if it were plucked from the best of '70s radio. It oozes southern-fired greasy soul, something most people have forgotten. Yet, it's as polished as anything the '90s have to offer.

Maxwell's voice is a killer instrument. It's a sweet tenor that glides effortlessly into an angelic falsetto. "Till The Cops Come Knocking" will have you grabbing the CD jacket to see if Marvin Gaye had anything to do with the song. Physically, no. Spiritually? Heck, yes.

His voice is simply stunning on "Whenever, Wherever, Whatever," a lilting ballad of unconditional love, returned or not. The imagery is sparkling. The execution, flawless.

For those who like to groove, the first three songs will more than satisfy. "The Urban Theme," "Welcome" and the infectious "Sumthin'" are some of the best head bobbin' songs of the year. Maxwell is a major talent waiting for the public's discovery. Run to your nearest record store.

Various Artists
Sisters: The Story Goes On
Cheryl Rogers, producer
Warner Alliance Records



☆☆☆☆

This is the second installment of an ongoing series of albums designed to praise women and God.

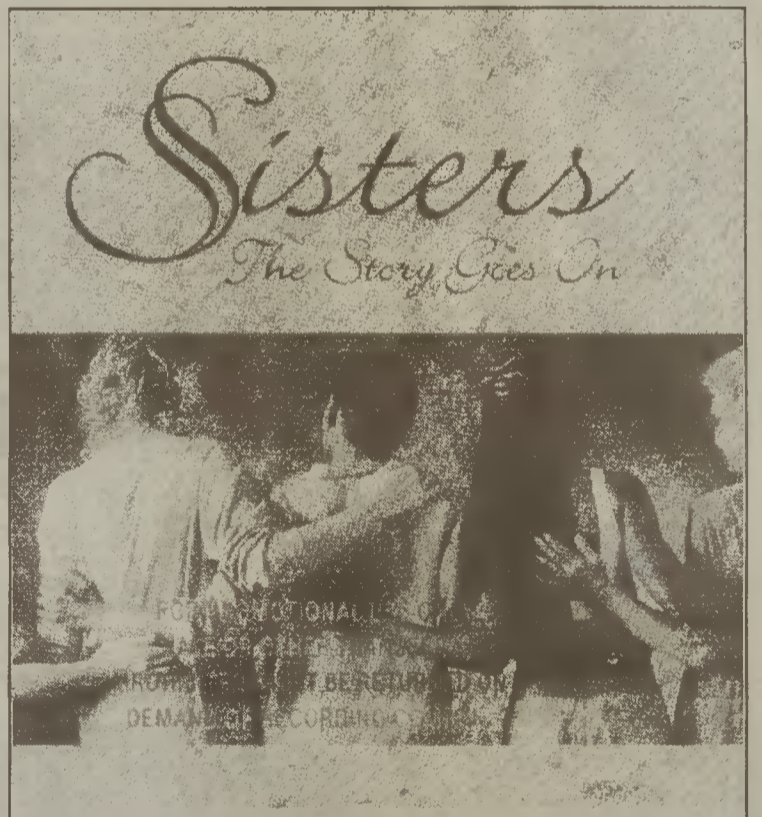
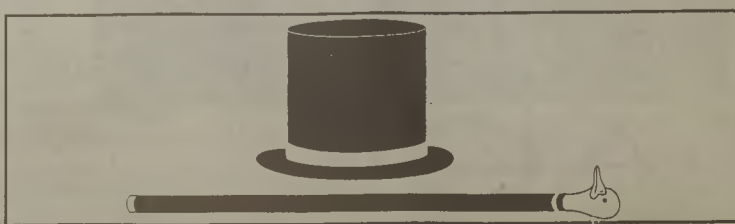
Conceived by Gail Hamilton and Janice Chaffee, the work obtains its goals by combining 24 of the best women singers available with some very moving material.

The opening number sets the tone. Cece, Angie and Debbie Winans offer "Always Sisters," a nearly dance-oriented testament of the power of abiding love and caring through Christ. "Godspeed" finds Babbie Mason, Janet Paschal and Tanya Goodman-Sykes in perfect harmony. Tata Vega and Maia Amada offer the heart-felt "You Don't Have To Know Why," which deals with the times when you don't understand what God's doing in your life.

The showstoppers of the work are "Don't Hide The Scars," done with loving care by Beverly Crawford and Cindy Morgan and "This Two Shall Pass" by Yolanda Adams and Crystal Lewis. The latter is a power ballad that Adams and Lewis blow away with gale-wind force.

This could easily be called the "Waiting To Exhale" of the

"The Urban Theme," "Welcome" and the infectious "Sumthin'" are some of the best head bobbin' songs of the year" WINFRED CROSS



SISTERS

Christian women's movement, minus the profanity. Bravo.

Rating:
☆☆☆☆ Classic;
☆☆☆☆ Excellent;
☆☆☆☆ Good;
☆☆ Fair;
☆ Why?;
No Stars Given -
Please, Spare Us

