

Jam and Lewis still going strong as pals

By Jeff Beanan
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EDINA, Minn. — Producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis don't want to be hot. They just want to simmer.

"We see too many hot people come and go," Lewis said. "You just want to stay lukewarm, keep the simmer going. You don't want to overcook it."

For 15 years, Jam and Lewis have kept the simmer going — writing and producing hits for such stars as Janet Jackson and Michael Jackson, Boyz II Men, Mary J. Blige, Herb Alpert, New Edition and Johnny Gill.

Along the way they have picked up a Grammy Award in 1987 for Producers of the Year, an Oscar nomination for "Again" from the 1993 movie "Poetic Justice" starring Janet Jackson, and a trophy case of songwriting awards.

Jam's and Lewis' hit-making powers could be put to the test, though, with Janet Jackson's latest album, "The Velvet Rope." The fourth collaboration between Jackson and Jam and Lewis debuted at No. 1 on Billboard magazine's album chart but dropped out of the Top 10 within a month.

The album's first single, "Got 'Til It's Gone," featuring a rap by Q-Tip and a sample of folk singer Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi," was embraced by black radio stations but stalled on the Hot 100 radio airplay chart.

From her breakthrough 1986 album "Control" through 1989's "Rhythm Nation" and 1993's "janet." to "The Velvet Rope," Jackson has continually evolved, Jam says. All were Jam and Lewis productions; the first three combined to sell more than 17 million copies in the United States.

"It's her — now. And she's not the person she was four years ago," Jam said of Jackson's latest album.

Jackson, 31, told Newsweek magazine that she battled depression the past two years and that it took her six months to record "The Velvet Rope" — about twice as long as previous records.

"There weren't a lot of songs that she could just walk in and sing," Jam said. "A lot of times she'd just say, 'You know what, I don't want to work today,'" he says.

On the upbeat "Together Again," Jackson sings of even-



Terry Lewis, Janet Jackson and James K. Harris III

FILE PHOTO

tually being reunited in heaven with friends who have died of AIDS. She confronts an abusive lover in "What About" and sings about bondage in "Rope Burn."

When Jam and Lewis first began working with Jackson, she had released a couple of albums and was known more as a TV star ("Good Times," "Diff'rent Strokes," "Fame") and as Michael Jackson's kid sister.

"We got a lot of credit as kind of the Svengalis," Jam says of the "Control" album. Since then, he said, Jackson has become a true collaborator.

Besides Janet Jackson, Jam and Lewis also have worked with Jon Secada, Patti LaBelle, Rod Stewart, Vanessa Williams and Luther Vandross this year. Before the year is out they may work with Brandy, star of TV's "Moesha."

In separate interviews at their Flyte Tyme Studios in suburban Minneapolis, the two are dressed casually — Jam in stocking feet and a black straw hat, Lewis in a sweatshirt. Usually they sport fedoras and sunglasses for photo shoots.

Friends for 25 years, Jam and Lewis often refer to their partnership as a marriage. The two met in 1972 at the University of Minnesota in an Upward Bound program for promising students from urban schools.

Jam (real name: James Harris III), 38, says Lewis, who turns 41 on Nov. 24, reminded him of "a cool older brother,

almost."

A bass player, Lewis invited Jam to join his band. Since the band already had a drummer, Lewis persuaded Jam to take up keyboards like his father, jazz pianist "Cornbread" Harris.

Their band, Flyte Tyme, evolved into The Time, a Prince project of the early 1980s. Jam and Lewis were producing on the side when a freak snowstorm stranded them in Atlanta and they missed a Time concert.

Prince kicked them out of the band, so Jam and Lewis started producing full-time.

Jam is loquacious ("Senator Jam" Lewis calls him), Lewis laconic. Jam admiringly calls his partner "a ridiculous lyricist" with a flair for editing.

"If I come up with an idea that's not good, Terry'd be the first one to say, 'Ah, that ain't happening,' or vice versa," Jam said.

Their partnership is based on a handshake and an agreement to split everything 50-50. But their relationship goes beyond business. Both partners are fixtures at Minnesota Timberwolves games (an NBA team they once considered buying), and Lewis is godfather to Jam's 1-year-old son, Tyler James (Janet Jackson is godmother).

Next year their new label, Flyte Tyme Records, debuts with an album by Angel, an Atlanta singer.

Dolby Digital enhances sound

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directionality.

- four output channels; left, center, right and surround.

- automatic input balance control. (most units).

- test noise sequence and level adjustments to balance all four channels.

- center channel mode control, normal, phantom, and optional wide modes.

Some pro logic decoders also offer an additional decoding mode, Dolby 3 stereo, which provide left, center and right front channels only. This mode is used when full surround is not required or impossible, (open room). But a wide stereo sound field without a hole in fee middle is desirable. A TV set, for example, could be supplied with detachable speakers for a wide stereo spread with an integrated center speaker to improve dialogue positioning as with any pro logic system. The Dolby 3 stereo mode can be useful if you are unable to install surround speakers right away. And with a full surround system if may prove preferable for such programs sources as synthesized "stereo" TV broadcasts or music recording with vocals solos.

Surround Sound, Past, Present, and Future

Not long ago, cinema sound, television audio and music play back formats were distinctly different products of industries often working in isolation. The growing popularity of surround sound in the homes however, has brought these industries

and their sound formats close together. This article traces surround sound to the first stereo phonic movie formats of the '1950s, and described how in recent years there has been technological cross-fertilization among the entertainment media.

Today, multi-channel digital technology is poised to promote faster, even closer industry cooperation, leading to a more consistent approach to home sound reproduction. It has the potential to ease the burden on both consumer and producer, while providing unparalleled fidelity not just the tonality of live sound, but also it's spatiality.

Origin of Surround Sound

Although film stereo lost favor in the '60s and early '70s due to the high cost of magnetic formats, sound mixers continued to experiment with the effect channel formats such as six-track 70 mm magnetic, which provided consistent signal to noise ratios on all channels, so mixers could use the effect channel to envelop the audience in continuous low-level ambient sounds. The hereof channel came to convey greater sonic realism overall not just the occasionally dramatic effect.

This expanded, more natural practice came to be known as surround sound, and the effect channel as the surround channel. The extra speakers at fee rear, and now along the side of the theater wall to create a more diffused sound field came

to be known within the industry as The Surround. We also call surround sound "home theater."

The basic components in putting together a surround sound system consist of the following:

- a surround receiver. This is a five-channel receiver. This is also called a radio or a tuner by some.

- a stereo VCR.

- one center channel, two rear and two front or main speakers.

- a subwoofer, which is a box with one large driver (speaker) enclosed with an amplifier. This speaker gives you that very, very low thunderous bass sound that can rattle your windows.

The receiver can be used for regular stereo listening through two speakers. Or you can listen to your favorite music in the surround mode with all five speakers with the sub providing deep bass. While in this mode, the center channel provides all dialogue or main voices, the front speakers all background instrumentals and backup vocals and the rear speakers all the high frequency background noises.

These units can start at \$500 and go up to as much as you can afford to pay. Just keep in mind, you get what you pay for.

Rob Miller is a sales consultant with Audio-Video Systems on Independence Boulevard in Charlotte.



Greenville Unity: The Coca-Cola Community Connection staff recently caught (L-R) Meredith Thomas, Alanna Fulford, Marquis Hudson, Laquisha Jones and Reginald Williams at the Greenville Community Center enjoying the beautiful weather and refreshing Coca-Cola products.

"African-American Cultural Expo"

The first annual African-American Cultural Expo is coming to the Charlotte Convention Center on Saturday, November 22nd and Sunday, November 23rd. Highlighting this 2-day showcase of African American Art, history and businesses are speeches by comedian and activist Dick Gregory and empowerment specialist Dr. Claud Anderson. For additional information please call 1-800-974-2223.

"100 Black Carolina Football Classic"

The 100 Black Men Of Greater Charlotte's third annual Carolina Football Classic "The Battle At The Border"..... Featuring the SC State Bulldogs and the Aggies of NC A&T State University, will be held on Saturday, November 22nd at Ericson Stadium. Home of the NFL's Carolina Panthers. Please call 704-519-0540 for more details.

"Las Amigas, Inc."

The Charlotte Mecklenburg Chapter of Las Amigas, Inc. presents its 22nd Annual Harvest Ball at the lovely Oasis Shrine Temple 604 Daniel Burnham Drive, Charlotte, North Carolina. The events takes place on November 22, 1997 from 9:00 p.m. until 1:00 am. For additional information please call 549-4777

"The WIZ"

The Afro-American Children's Theater, Inc. presents The WIZ.... a musical adapted from the Wonderful Wizard of Oz. There will be nine performance dates from Saturday, Nov 15th thru Nov 23rd at the Nations Bank Theater at Spirit Square. For more details call 372-7410.

"Great American Smokeout"

This November 20th, 1997 marks the 21st anniversary of the Great American Smokeout. The Great American Smokeout is an annual event when Americans try to quit smoking for a day. There will be various locations throughout the city where volunteers will have survival kits and information on how to stop smoking.

"Here's How You Can Be Connected"

Submit, in writing, on your organization's letterhead, the title of your event, data location, contact person and telephone number for your activity to:
Community Connection
5001 Chesapeake Dr. Charlotte, NC 28216 Attn.: Jeff Lowery. Phone 393-4365. Fax 393-4265
If you are interested in the Coca-Cola Community Music Van appearing at your non profit event call: 393-4365. Fax 393-4265



Customer Appreciation: Henny Penny Discount Beverage located at 2651 West Blvd. Recently held a customer appreciation day for all their loyal supporters. The Coca-Cola Community Connection team was on hand providing a basketball shoot-out for prizes, refreshments and the latest music via the Community Connection Music Van

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