

Entertainment

Aaron Neville Has Lived What He Sings About

Aaron Neville has heard the stories. About a clinic in England that plays his records to soothe addicts going through detoxification. Kids in India who speed their mopeds to the top of a hump backed bridge, timing their arrival to coincide with one of Neville's ethereal falsettos.

From a woman who simply asked to touch him, then explained that his music had stopped her from committing suicide.

Heavy stuff. But not a complete surprise to Neville, a deeply religious man.

"I know it's coming from somewhere else," he says of his singing which has been likened more than once to sounds from an angel. "A lot of times I might be hoarse before a show, but then I say a little prayer before I go out, and it's gone."

"I think innocence is the key word. Sometime when I sing I get choked up because I'm thinking of all the people I've known and wishing there was a way I could ease some of the pain that I've seen and felt. I try to share that in my music. And I'm singing for all the people that didn't have a song, or that fell by the wayside, a lot of my friends. I ain't got but a few left you know," he adds. "A lot of them are either dead, crazy or in the penitentiary."

Such are the contradictions of being Aaron Neville, a man who has lived much of his 52 years with his feet on the ground and his voice in the sky.

"People say to me, how can such a sweet voice come out of the body of a linebacker?" he relates dryly. "I tell them, 'Hey man, it's the perfect package.'"

Much of the same could be said of the grand tour, Aaron Neville's second solo album for A&M Records. It is a collection of songs that in ways, both deliberate but unforced, suggests a kind of musical

biography. Produced by Steve Lindsey (who has worked recently with singers as disparate as Alexander O'Neal, Diane Schuur and Leonard Cohen), it's a record that resurrects timeless strains of soul, R&B, country, gospel, rock and roll, Tin Pan Alley, Mardi Gras music and contemporary pop. All rendered with a continuity of style and purpose that seems to travel the world without ever abandoning the spirit of New Orleans -- the birthplace of American music, and of course, Neville himself.

Not coincidentally, many of the songs here also suggest key touchstones from a career and life very much in progress.

The third of the famous Neville Brothers grew up in the Calliope housing project. His mother and uncle has been a song and dance team good enough to elicit an offer to go on the road with bandleader Louis Prima ("But my grandmother said no," Aaron explains with a laugh. "Otherwise, there might not have been any Neville Brothers"). Art, the oldest of the Neville Brothers, was one of Aaron's earliest influences, but it was his father's collection of smooth Nat King Cole records that gave Aaron his first direction as a singer.

As a kid he fell in love with doo-wop groups like the Orioles and the Platters, and discovered he had a natural gift for high tenor leads.

Not surprisingly, Aaron performance here of the standard "These Foolish Things" evokes the ghost of Nat King Cole, as well as of the singer whose influence on his career is most apparent, Sam Cooke.

"I first heard that song on a Sam Cooke album call Mr. Soul," he recalls. "And I would put that record on the turntable and lay on the floor and listen to it over and over."

While the arrangements to another standard here, "Ain't No Way" will remind some listeners of



Aaron Neville

the version by Aretha Franklin. Neville's sensitively nuanced vocal - heard the way he croons 'Sure Ain't No Way Toward' the song's end - once more underlines the bond he shares with the late, great Cooke.

A new song "My Brother, My Brother," harkens in both texture and theme to the music of Marvin Gaye, and in particular his unforgettably trenchant "What's Goin On." Neville uses the occasion to make a personal statement about family ties - brothers Cyril, Art and Charles Neville also perform on this tune that works as a metaphor for the larger brotherhood of Man.

Aaron bookends his new album with "Song of Bernadette," per-

formed as a duet with Linda Ronstadt.

"We have chemistry when we sing. It's like we sang together in a different life, you know?" he said.

The grand tour is certainly a giant step in the right direction.

The title song was once a hit for country legend George Jones, another singer for whom Neville feels an affinity.

"George has lived all that stuff he sings about. Because to be able to feel what you're singing about you have to live it, or at least witness it."

"In my case," he says, "I've lived it."

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The April 23rd performance is sponsored by Decision Point Marketing, Inc.
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International Day Held at WSSU

Winston-Salem State University will hold its traditional International Day from 12-5 p.m. today in the student mall area of the campus.

The public is invited to enjoy the festivities, which include music and dance, ethnic fashions, artist and crafts, skits performed in foreign languages, face painting, and a wide variety of vendor sales. Ethnic

foods will also be available.

The event attracts hundreds of school age children, preschoolers, college students, senior citizens and the community at large.

The theme of this year's celebration is "International Day: A Global Affair."

For more information, call the Office of Public Affairs, 750-2150.

Artist Present Studio Tour

Associated Artists of Winston-Salem Inc. will sponsor an Artist's Studios Tour on Sunday from 1-5 p.m. Nine Winston-Salem artists will open their studios to the public during this tour.


The following artists will participate: Nicholas Bragg; Joe King; Earline Heath King; Jean Parish; Elsie Dinsmore Popkin; Norma Rogers; Anne Kesler Shields; Tony

Swider; Linda Weaver. Cost of the tour is \$6.

Tickets may be purchased in advance at the Associated Artists office, located in the Sawtooth Building at 226 N. Marshall St. On the day of the tour, tickets will be available at all studio locations.

Call 722-0340 for more information.

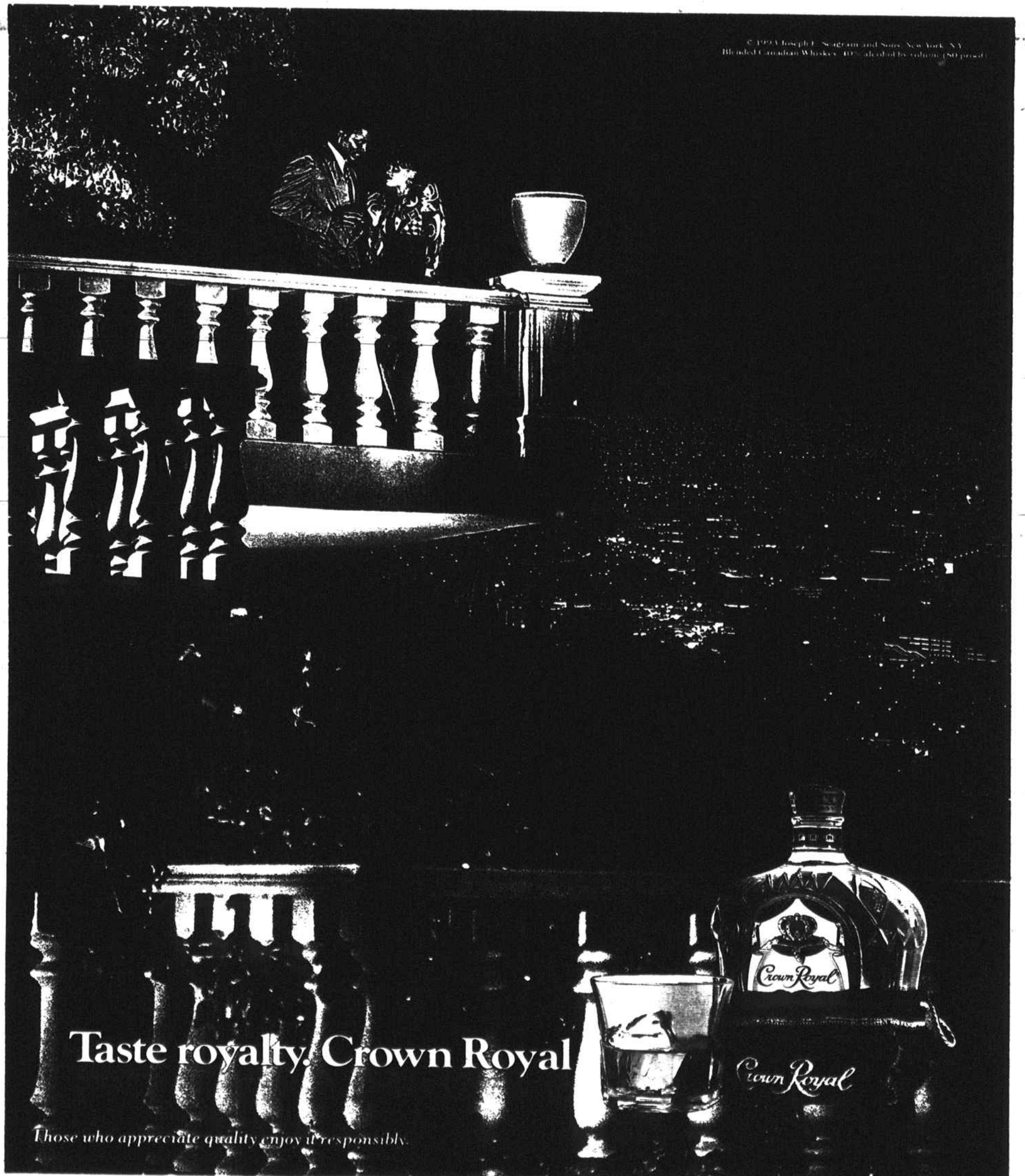
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