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Midnight Star Delivers Sound Known As "Techno-Funk"

By Loretta Manago
Entertainment Editor

"Techno-Funk." Defined, the word means the usage of the latest in electronic percussion sounds and keyboard technology. Translated into the name of the group that delivers this sound of the 80s, the word means Midnight Star.

Think back to the grooves, "No Parking On The Dance Floor," and "Freak-A-Zoid" and you can almost hear the electronic rhythms ushering forth sounds too diverse to be isolated to one instrument. And what about Midnight Star's latest hit, "Operator?" It's a funky electric boogie crafted especially to bring out the rock and roll.

Proving that versatility is a part of success, Midnight Star easily breaks away from techno-funk and through ballads like "Slow Jam" and "Today My Love" captivates another audience, as well as the rockers.

While still members at Kentucky State University, Midnight Star was formed nearly 10 years ago. In the early stages of the band's existence rehearsal often took place in the off-limits confines of band leader's Reggie Calloway's dormitory room. It wasn't long before the group realized that it was music that they were interested in and not the formal education college provided. Their next course of action was to pursue music on a full-time basis.

Upon hearing about a talent showcase in New York, Midnight Star, packed their belongings, which included all equipment, stereos and dyno gyms and headed for the Big Apple.

Midnight Star must have made some impression on the sponsors of the talent showcase. Three thousand miles away, in Los Angeles, Solar president, Dick Griffey heard of the group's performance and went to see for



MIDNIGHT STAR

...Coming to Charlotte

himself. What he saw was a group that possessed incredible showmanship, songwriting skills and a mastery of a large array of instruments. Griffey's next move was to sign Midnight Star to his record company.

Members of the group include: Reggie Calloway, Vincent Calloway, Jeffrey Cooper, Kenneth Gant, Melvin Gentry, Bobby Lovelace, Bill Simmons, Bo Watson and Belinda Lipscomb.

The leader of the group, Reggie Calloway, believes very strongly that dreams can come true. He has seen his dream materialize through the growing status and popularity of Midnight Star. A highly skilled musician, Calloway plays trumpet, flute, keyboards, percussion and sings background vocals. His gift as a producer has made hits for the Whispers, the Deele as well as Midnight Star.

Vincent Calloway, brother of the band's leader lacks nothing as a musician. In addition to playing trombone, trumpet, percussion, vocoder, keyboards and

singing background vocals, Calloway is branching out into producing and songwriting.

Jeff Cooper is master of the keyboard and the guitar, but he's also discovering a joy for experimentation in electronics and computers. He has co-produced songs for both Carrie Lucas and the Deele.

From piano to tuba to bass guitar Kenneth Gant plays them all, including keyboards and trombone. When not playing, Gant is busy arranging tunes and writing songs. He has contributed to the albums of many artists, including The Whispers.

Melvin Gentry's background is full of musicians. Although he is one of three lead singers for Midnight Star, he plays guitar, bass guitar, drums and percussions.

Music started for Bobby Lovelace at the age of 12. A drummer and percussionist, Lovelace played with Cameo and Mantra before joining Midnight Star. Immersing himself further into the music industry, Lovelace is polishing up his song-

writing skills and concentrating on producing.

At a very early age, teachers were calling Bill Simmons a "child prodigy." At the age of five he was a self-taught keyboard player and he mesmerized his teachers with his musical aptitude. For Midnight Star Simmons plays saxophone, percussions, as well as keyboards, but he is really interested into getting involved with producing and arranging.

At the reign on lead vocals, Bo Watson has been singing and playing since the age of three. It is his songwriting and keyboard skills that are displayed on the hit, "Operator." Watson has also worked with The Whispers and Klymaxx on a number of tunes.

With Belinda Lipscomb as lead vocalist the talents of Midnight Star gel together for an effect that spells success.

On April 7 Midnight Star, along with Shalamar and Klymaxx will be in concert at the Coliseum, beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$12.50.

Apollo Special

Bill Cosby will host a three-hour comedy-and-contemporary music event celebrating the 50th anniversary and official re-opening of New York City's world-famous Apollo Theatre, on NBC-TV in May.

The gala special is to be produced by Motown Productions, whose association with the Apollo dates back to 1962, when Motown's Motor Town Revue first visited the theatre. Stars presented by Motown during the 1960s - when Motown became the Apollo's major source of headliner acts - include Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross and the Supremes, the late Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Martha and the Vandellas and The Temptations.