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Atlantic Starr Can Dish Out Ballads And Funk

By Loretta Manago
Managing Editor

Entertainers who sing ballads and are known for that trademark have no problem selling ballads to the listening audience. Entertainers who sing upbeat, dancing tunes find it a easy task to deliver that sound to their listeners again and again.

The problem comes in when those balladeers want to sing upbeat tunes and those with funk on their mind want to mellow down the pace and sing a love song or two. That's where the resistance comes.

It's rare when a group can pull a broad audience with the loveliest of love songs and the funk-iest of beats. It's rare, but Atlantic Starr is a rare group.

Formed 10 years ago, the group merged through three other bands. Their line-up has gone from nine to five, with four original members still on hand. Their record sales have climbed into the millions and



Atlantic Starr
... "The band has changed"

their crossover appeal attract pop as well as rhythm and blues audiences.

The heart of Atlantic Starr is the three Lewis brothers—David, Johnathan and Wayne. In addi-

tion to performing vocals, Wayne and David play keyboards and guitar respectively. Johnathan concentrates on the trombone and keyboard. The other stabilizing element lies

in percussionist Joseph Phillips. Between these four, the style and sound of Atlantic Starr has been defined.

The polishing of their act, the replacement of longtime

singer, Sharon Bryant for Barbara Weathers met the audience's wild approval with the release of "As The Band Turns." Yes, some secrets were revealed through the lp. Many longtime Atlantic Starr fans probably heard a side of the group that had not been heard before. And from the monetary success of the album, listeners liked what they heard. Yet it was with "Secret Lovers" that Atlantic Starr was able to break new ground while retaining their signature sound.

"We always thought we had a crossover sound," said David Lewis. "But sometimes if you have a broad appeal people don't know where to put you. We're just glad that more people are getting to hear us now."

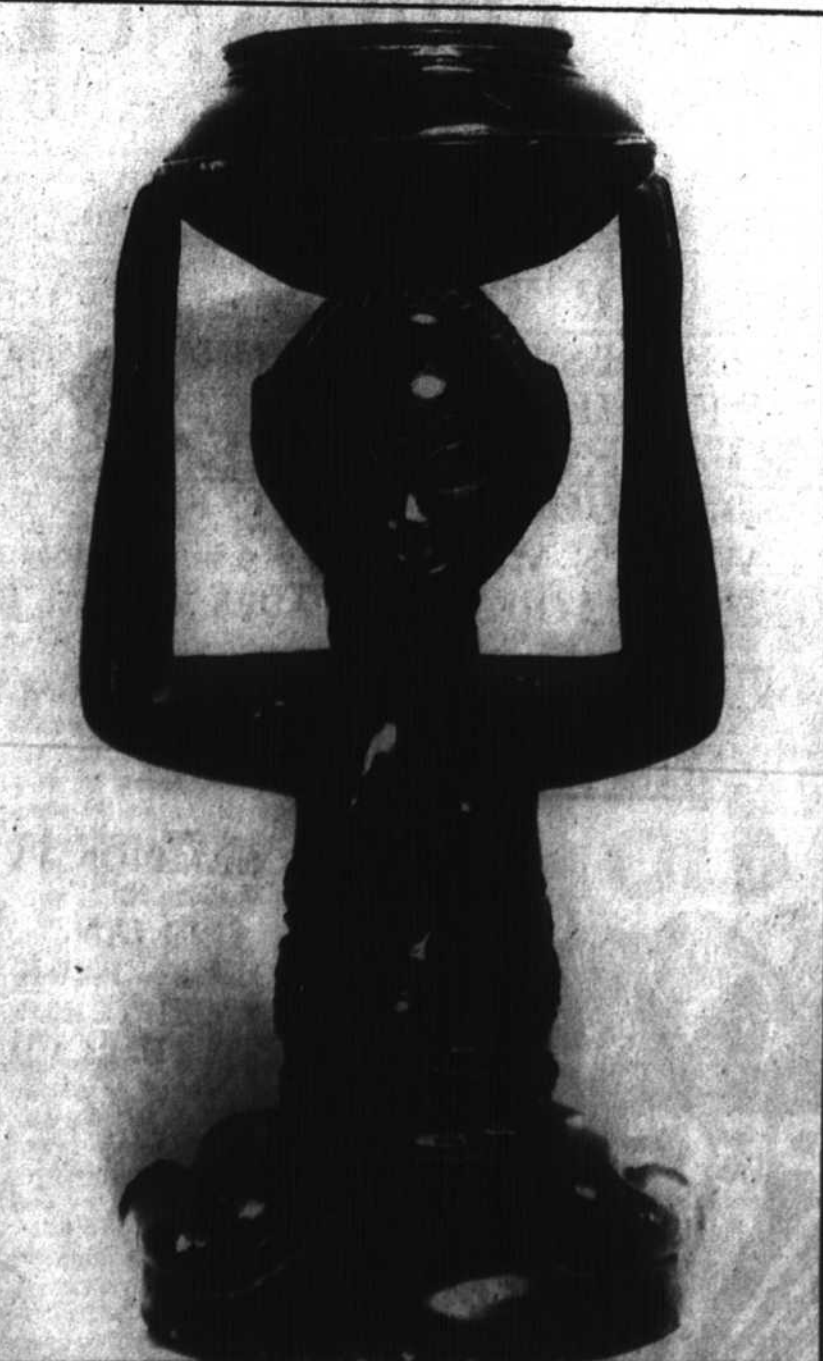
Even those listeners who may have just tuned into Atlantic Starr have the chance to hear what the group was like in the earlier days. The group released "Secret Lovers"...The Best Of Atlantic Starr

which represents four of the group's six albums. "It is a collection that vividly documents the journey of a band that made its name on the strength of its ballads, but was also versatile enough to incorporate funk and dance styles in the mix, resulting in a crossover sound that gave Atlantic Starr its biggest success.

While "Secret Lovers" captured those who love the idea of romance, "Freak-A-Ristic" helped grab the younger audience. "While we were never going to abandon the ballads, we said to our fans, 'Look, the band has changed. We're not just balladeers anymore—we do party cuts, too.'"

Audiences obviously got the message. When Atlantic Starr returned home to begin the U.S. portion of their past tour, they began attracting young and old concertgoers alike, people who responded enthusiastically to both the familiar hits and the new album material.

African, Oceanic, New World Gallery To Open



Zaire, Luba, Bowl Bearer (Mboko), 20 century. Wood. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Hanes. From the African, Oceanic and New World Gallery, opening January 10.

The opening of the Africa, Oceanic and New World Gallery of the North Carolina Museum of Art provides museum visitors the opportunity to see a sampling of the rich and varied art of non-Western traditions.

According to curator Dr. Mary Ellen Soles, who is coordinating the installation of the gallery, "The distinctive feature of these works is that their primary function was never purely decorative. These objects served religious, political and social purposes of great importance to the cultures in which they were created."

The African, Oceanic and New World Gallery is the last permanent collection gallery to be installed in the museum's new building, which opened in April 1983. The installation will comprise approximately 55 African works, 35 pre-Columbian objects and 12 works from South Pacific cultures. Although works in this collection were occasionally on view in the museum's old building, the new, 4,500 square foot gallery will be their first permanent installation area.

The African collection includes fine examples of West African art such as masks, headdresses, and figures. Of particular interest are a "Pair of Twin Figures (Ibeji)" from the Yoruba of Nigeria; a "Pair of Antelope Headpieces (Tji Wara)" from the Bamana of Mali; and a "Sawfish Headpiece" from the Ibo of Nigeria.

Sculpture and ceramics of pre-Columbian cultures are featured in the initial New World installation. The collection is especially strong in the art of Mexico and Guatemala; a focal point of the

gallery will be the "Monumental Figure of a Priestess," a clay sculpture from Vera Cruz, Mexico.

Objects from the South Pacific regions of New Ireland, New Guinea and the New Hebrides, including masks and other ceremonial objects, will be on view in the Oceanic area. Of special interest will be an intricately carved "Malanggan Totem Pole" from New Ireland and a "Slit Gong" from the New Hebrides, depicted as a stylized human face, which stands nearly ten feet tall.

The installation of the gallery has been coordinated by Dr. Soles, who is curator of ancient art at the museum, with consultative curator Dr. Allen Wardwell, director of the Noguchi Museum in New York City. Available in the gallery will be a brochure which discusses selected works in the collection; it is illustrated in full color and costs \$.50.

The opening of the new gallery is made possible by generous contributions from the James G. Hanes Memorial Fund/Foundation and the John Wesley and Anna Hodgkin Hanes Foundation. Many of the objects have been given to the museum by Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Hanes of Winston-Salem, the Hanes Corporation and the James G. Hanes Memorial Fund. Gordon Hanes is chairman of the museum Board of Trustees.

The North Carolina Museum of Art is located at 2110 Blue Ridge Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27607. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday, 12-5 p.m., Sunday, closed Monday. For information, call the museum at 919-833-1935.



On this week's "Essence," Epic recording artist Luther Vandross talks with host/executive producer Susan L. Taylor about his preference for expressing love through his music. Also featured this week: master music video choreographer Michael Peters narrates the conclusion of a two-part "Our Style" series on black men in dance. Features include interviews with Louis Johnson, who was the first black to perform a major role in the New York City Ballet, and choreographers Alvin Ailey, Arthur Mitchell, Donald McKayle and Talley Beatty. And in the first of a two-part "Up Front" series on health care in the black community, guest co-host Gary Byrd discusses the growing health-care gap between black and white Americans. Featured interviews include malpractice attorney Celestyn Williams and physician Victor Scott of New York's Kings County Hospital. "Essence" airs on Sunday, January 25, on Channel 9 at 6 a.m. Pictured: Luther Vandross, Susan L. Taylor.