

Sonny Moore Achieves Measure Of Success As A Songwriter

By Loretta Richardson
Post Staff Writer

It all started in a church in New York. A group of youngsters sang in the choir; among them were Freddie Jackson, Paul Laurence and Sonny Moore. They called themselves the Laurence Jones Ensemble.

For a while singing in the church brought contentment, but it wasn't long before restlessness set in and five Laurence Jones Ensemble members, including Jackson, Laurence and Moore had set their sights on careers in secular entertainment. They left the church with a plan. Freddie would do the crooning, Paul, the producing and Sonny would pen the words to the songs.

Nothing could go wrong or so they thought. But their timing was all wrong. It was the 70s and disco reigned supreme in the music industry when LJE struck out on its own.

According to Sonny Moore, a songwriter who resides in Charlotte that was the beginning of his ventures into entertainment. Fortunately it was not the ending.

For each of them, success came in different ways. Freddie Jackson made it big with his sensational debut album, *Rock Me Tonight*.

Paul Laurence, made a name for himself producing the likes of Melba Moore and Evelyn King and Sonny Moore's lyrics were used by the both of them, as well as Michael Henderson and Freddie Jackson.

Moore reflects at their humble beginnings, "There we were

writing ballads and love songs and getting the doors slammed in our faces at the same time. We didn't change our style we just stuck with the kind of music we believed in until we got a chance.

As a songwriter, Moore confesses that he is in love with love ballads. "They seem to linger longer, and have a lasting impression."

Writing songs was also a very natural way for Moore to express his feelings. "I think I wrote about everything. If a girl I liked broke up with me, instead of lashing back at her, I would say how I

felt by writing a song.

Get Up Off Your Love written by Sonny Moore and Paul Laurence for Evelyn King in her comeback was the first song that broke for the songwriting team. It hit back in 1983.

Then it was off to Detroit where Laurence and Moore teamed up to produce, *You Wouldn't Have To Work At All* for Michael Henderson.

That was a few years ago. Today, Moore and Laurence are working very closely with Melba Moore's spouse, Charles Huggins, president of Hush Produc-

tions to have one of their songs, *You Are My Love* used as a theme song for a movie.

But even more exciting than the movie score, Moore and Laurence have future plans to write a couple of tunes for the soon-to-be reunited Earth, Wind & Fire. "I was talking to Paul the other day and he told me that Maurice White is putting the group back together again. Maurice and Paul met in LA and when asked his opinion about the E W & F, Paul told him that in his professional opinion the group should go back to the basics. So that's what

they're doing. Paul and I hope to have a couple of tunes on that album."

With Laurence being located in LA and Moore, here in Charlotte there's a lot of distance to be filled before a song can be written. The solution to the problem, Moore explains, depends on where the source of inspiration for the song came from. "If the idea was created here in Charlotte, then Paul comes here, if in LA, then that's where I go. Sometimes we go where the song has the best atmosphere to develop."

Writing songs is not all that

concerns Moore who is "a carpenter by day and musician by night." Realizing the abundance of talent here in the city, Moore has his eye open for someone he and Paul could produce. "We're looking for someone or a group that we could turn into star material and we really want it to come from here."

Moore likes to think that he and Paul are far beyond any of the songwriting teams today like Huff and Gamble. As a matter of fact he says: "I think that we're the hottest thing happening right now."

Wendy & Lisa

Strike Out

On Their Own

Wendy & Lisa, the guitar and keyboard mainstays of Prince's recently-disbanded group The Revolution, have cut their first album and signed with Columbia Records. The *Wendy & Lisa LP*, co-produced by Wendy & Lisa and former Revolution drummer Bobby Z-is scheduled for release the last week in July. Wendy plays acoustic and electric bass, guitar, some keyboards, percussion and drums on the LP. Lisa plays acoustic piano, Fairlight synthesizer, DX7, Matrix 12, Mirage, Sonic and Hammond B-3 synthesizers. Both sing lead vocals.

Everyone knows that Wendy & Lisa were considered (to quote Rolling Stone) "wicked musicians." But few realize that the duo began working together on songwriting and vocals nearly three years ago. They composed tunes like "Mountains" (on Prince's *Parade* album) and "Sometimes It Snows In April" (from Prince's *Around The World In A Day*). In addition, Wendy & Lisa frequently created arrangements and performed backing vocals on Prince LPs (they handled key arrangements, for example, on the song "Purple Rain"). While the pair were with Prince, they composed over 30 songs, working privately on music in which a strongly personal style emerged, music they seldom showed to even their closest friends. When they struck out on their own, however, Wendy & Lisa discarded nearly all of their previous compositions and started from scratch, determined to create music untinged by the Prince influence.

What emerged was not quite like the styles any of us have ever heard before. Says co-producer Bobby Z., "It's based on Lisa's ability to chord and color and Wendy's ability to come up with interesting melodic lines. Song structure flows out of Lisa. And Wendy can surround a song with intriguing bass and guitar parts. She has an unusual sense of tempo and pulse. She plays guitar with great timing and heart. She rips your guts out. But Wendy and Lisa's vocal ability is the most impressive thing on the album."

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