ENTERTAINMENT

MY TUNE

by
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What is passionate playing? In the simplests terms, passionate playing can be defined with three words: New World Trio. On Friday night my wife treated me to an evening that I won't quickly forget: a concert featuring the New World Trio. The trio which includes Kash Killion on cello, Eddie Marshall on drums and recorder and Durham native India Cooke on violin. A pleasantly curious effect was produced by this combination. The group "blends the roots of African-American blues and jazz traditions in a unique contemporary style."

The combination of violin, cello and drums allowed the performers a sense of freedom not obtainable in most groups. They were unrestrained by traditional combinations. The musicians were in total control of their instruments. They produced rhythmic and melodic combinations that I thought not possible for violin, cello and drums.

A program widely diverse in its content began with a Monk/Mingus medley. Monk and Mingus would have been proud of the group's interpretation of their pieces. India was featured on a piece she penned titled "6.23.83" that should have ended the program, or so I thought until I heard "Sirus A&B," a cello solo on a violin pedal point. The moving rhythm of "Halifu's Hat Dance" featured traditional African polyrhythms played by drummer Eddie Marshall in conversation with the violin and cello. The interplay between the instruments was unreal. These folks know each other... spiritually. An upbeat rendition of Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee" ended the first set.

The spiritual is a form that we as musicians seem never to get enough of. A special feature of the evening's concert was "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me," which was arranged by my old piano teacher, Barbara Cooke; yes, India's mother. The influences of the spiritual tradition and Barbara's longtime friend Don Shirley came through clearly, but there was enough of Ms. Cooke there to make for a wonderfully refreshing arrangement.

The melody was simple, the rhythm was simple, and the effect on the listener was highly complex.

India continued her mastery of the violin on "Ahh Ummbug." There was an amazing mood swing when in the middle of the second set Eddie Marshall switched to recorder for an effective piece of playing on Thelonious Monk's "Ruby My Dear," which happens to be one of my favorite standards. Kash Killion and India hooked up on Mal Waldron's "Soul Eyes." These two know how to extricate a song's underlying emotion. Both are amazingly dextrous on their instruments. The set closed with a piece by Kash Killion ("Killion Trillion") which seemed to snap everybody awake. Now if you can imagine not being asleep in the first place and being snapped awake, that's the kind of effect the piece had.

My only criticism of the concert was that it was not well put-together technically. The drums were overpowering at times. The regal and splendid interplay between the violin and the cello was often lost in the rumble of the snare drum. The violin and cello should have been amplified so that we could have heard more of that wonderful sound.

Dance Festival Receives Grant Reader's Funds

The American Dance Festival has received a $300,000 grant from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund for the production and touring of its Black Tradition in American Modern Dance program.

The three-year grant will support twin goals: the reconstruction of modern dance classics by African-American choreographers and the touring of these works to audiences around the country.

Since 1988, ADF's Black Tradition in American Modern Dance project has reconstructed works by Donald McKayle, Eleo Pomare, Talley Beatty and Pearl Primus, and presented them to ADF audiences. Many of the works were set on the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, whom the choreographers cited repeated for the quality of its dancers. Thus, DCDC now has in its repertory such works as McKayle's "District Storyville" and "Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder," Pomare's "Blues for the Jungle" and "Missa Luba," and Beatty's "Mourner's Bench" and "The Road of the Phoebe Show."

During the next three years, the Dayton company will tour the country performing these and other masterworks, while a panel of dance experts will select additional classics by African-American choreographers for reconstruction on the company. Each year, DCDC will also perform at the ADF in Durham (in 1991, it performs June 13-15).

ADF is also offering a humanities/audience education program to complement the Black Traditions performances and place the works in the context of American culture. These public panels and discussions, to be presented before each performance, will bring together a team of scholars led by Dr. Gerald Myers, professor of philosophy at Queens College, whose long association with ADF on other audience education projects has been highly successful. The humanities program will be tailored to the specific needs and interests of the community; sponsors may use it as a tool for broadening and diversifying their audiences.

The Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund promotes the growth and appreciation of the arts in America through projects of national impact in the performing, visual and literary arts by encouraging interactions between artists and communities. Thus, fund-initiated programs often incorporate community outreach, partnerships, and collaborations to support artistic endeavors. With annual grants totaling more than $20 million, the fund is one of the largest private funders of the arts in the United States.

UP WITH PEOPLE—The world will come alive in Memorial Auditorium on Sunday, May 12, as the international cast of "Up with People" brings its all new show "Face to Face" to Raleigh. The two-hour musical extravaganza, featuring a cast of 150 young people from around the world is a special Mother's Day celebration to help build a Children's Museum About the World in downtown Raleigh. In a special salute to Raleigh's international population, more than 150 Raleigh youngsters have been invited to join the cast for two unforgettable children's songs.

Gee Morris Leads Innocence Into Unique Territory With House Rock

Innocence is more than a group. Innocence is a state of mind. Chosen as the moniker for a talented group of British soulsters, Innocence has carved out a unique territory that might best be called Ambient House Rock. Fronted by a suave and supersensuous lead singer named Gee Morris, the collective boasts London's triumvirate production team of Anna Jolley, Mark Jolley and Brian Harris.

Together their aim was to create music as listenable as it was danceable, and since house music kept clubgoers on the dance floor and soul music defined feeling, Innocence married the two into an intoxicating and hypnotic sound.

Their debut release on Chrysalis Records, "Belief," weaves 10 irresistibly melodic compositions into a soulful tapestry that covers a wide musical spectrum. The LP's first single, "Let's Push It," alternates between rhythmic dance grooves and lullaby-soft guitar passages. "Silent Voice" is a riveting, jazzy moodmaker whose lyrics, explains Morris, "suggest the silence of children, innocent parties who can't do anything for themselves in an adult world."

Topping the charts all over Europe, "Nature! Thing" is an anti-apartheid song with a distinct romantic edge. And "Riders on the Storm" is an atmospheric update on the classic Doors track.

Connecting all the songs is Innocence's signature positive message: uplifting, encouraging, self-aware. Morris says, "I don't like to shock people into listening to what I have to say. Music should be performed for people to relax into. It can be tough for people struggling to achieve their goals, so I believe we should thrive off each other's energies."

Morris' philosophy on music developed when she started singing at age 14 with a local band, having previously sung in her church choir. The group gave her an entree into commercial performance, and also into songwriting. "I was always more into writing," she confesses, "but I get a buzz from performing." She became affiliated with Innocence when her longtime friend, Paul Johnson, asked her to help out with a project.

The result is "Belief," an album that has already gone gold in the UK, with five top 40 hits. The sound of Innocence has also topped the charts in Germany, Spain, France, Japan and Australia.

"I think I've been very fortunate," remarks Morris, on the international success of Innocence to date.

Now, "Belief" is about to hit U.S. stores, with key tracks newly mixed for the American audience. But the group's special energy is a constant: "Innocence is all about the right attitude," concludes Gee Morris. "It's about positive vibes."

GEE MORRIS

JON LUCIEN

Lucien Re-enters Music Scene With New Albums

Jon Lucien, international performing and recording artist, musician, composer and arranger, re-enters the music scene with a brilliant new album, "Listen Love:" his debut release on Mercury Records.

Smooth and easy, with a pleasing afterraste that gently caresses the tastebuds, Jon's new album frames the magnificence of this rare performer. His warm, rhythmic lyrics and melodies reflect the essence of his native St. Thomas, where, as a young boy, he learned the musical skills of his father, Eric, an accomplished classical guitarist, and his mother, Eloise, a singer.

Dubbed "The Architect of Aural Seduction," Jon's the frontrunner to musical seducers like Al Jarreau and Luther Vandross. Jon was nominated twice in the same category for the Grammy Awards for his compositions "Lady Love" and "Rashida" from the album of the same name.

His distinctive voice has been featured in more than a dozen television and radio commercial endorsements including Air Jamaica, Almond Joy, Burger King, Diet Seven Up, Exxon and U.S. Virgin Islands.

Now, after a self-imposed hiatus lasting almost a decade, Jon Lucien, the man whose seductive tenor-baritone vocals put the quiet in the storm, is back with "Listen Love," which he produced and wrote. Jon also utilized the remarkable talents of Jeff Lorber to produce two of the cuts.

During his absence from the forefront of the music industry, Jon retreated to the laid-back Caribbean sanctuary of his native St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands. He stayed there from 1985 to 1989, a period during which he says, "I just stopped singing. I played my bass in little jazz combos making $100 a night. That might sound crazy but it was just something I needed to do." It wasn't until he moved to the rural hills of Puerto Rico (where he still resides) that the urge to record once again surfaced.

Living peacefully in the solitude of the beautiful rain forest, he enjoys the luxury of island living where he finds the tranquil beauty to be creative and where he deals with the industry more on his own terms, where maturity has calmed his fears of new musical trends such as rap and hip-hop, preventing his music from being heard. "I can't worry about that now. America speaks several different languages. You know, there's the street, the intellectual, the rich, the poor, the white collar, the blue collar, and so forth. I just speak my language as best I can through my music."

With such rhythmically sensual romantic songs as "Sweet Control," "Nothing Lasts Forever," "Listen Love," and "You Take My Breath Away," there's no dobut that this new album will place Jon Lucien back in the forefront of the music scene. "I can't let the fear of musical barriers hinder me," he adds, summing it all up. "Because in the final analysis it's humans that are listening and they are going to make their own choices."

Award Named For Compser Goes To Fitzgerald

NEW YORK (AP) — Ella Fitzgerald gets the Cole Porter Centennial You're The Top award at Radio City Music Hall.

Margaret Cole Richards, a cousin of the Indiana composer, presented Miss Fitzgerald with an engraved crystal sculpture during the jazz singer's concert at Radio City.

She was honored for "outstanding achievements for sustaining the Cole Porter legend." The award is named after one of the composer-lyricist's most popular hits.

ELECTRIFYING SINGER—The Electrifying singer Whitney Houston, whose nine consecutive No. 1 hits have earned her superstar status in the music industry, talks candidly about her relationships with Eddie Murphy, Arsenio Hall and other men, and responds to the lies and rumors that have accompanied her phenomenal career, in the May EBONY. From the public humiliation of being booed at a popular music awards broadcast, to being linked with various Hollywood stars and athletes, Whitney describes her constant battles with public opinion and explains what it's like to "wake up every day with a magnifying glass over you."

Rap Show Canceled

HAMPTON, Va. (AP)—Friday night's scheduled concert by Run-DMC, which became the subject of a lawsuit by the city, was canceled after just 53 people showed up to hear the rap group perform.

Promoter Ron Holt thanked those who showed up at Legion Hall and refunded their ticket costs.

Holt, who said he had expected a crowd so large that people would have to be turned away from the 1,125-seat facility, declined to comment on his decision to cancel the show.

The city had filed a lawsuit asking that the concert be barred from Legion Hall because of the building's size and proximity to residential areas and small businesses.