

ENTERTAINMENT

# Patti LaBelle Teams With Big Daddy Kane

On the heels of last year's bestselling holiday album *This Christmas*, Patti LaBelle, the queen of rock and soul, has just completed her newest album for MCA Records, *Burnin'*. Due for release in mid-October, *Burnin'* features a smokin' assortment of solo sizzlers and spectacular duets, including collaborations with rapper Big Daddy Kane, pop superstar Michael Bolton, the velvet-voiced Luther Vandross, soul sister Gladys Knight and, for the first time in 15 years, a reunion with Nona Hendryx and Sarah Dash, Patti's former partners in the ground-breaking musical group LaBelle.

Between recording, acting and teaming up with some good pals in the music world, the diva extraordinaire has certainly had her hands full. As summer gives way to fall, Patti has just completed shooting the video for "Superwoman," a smash team-up with Gladys Knight and Dionne War-

wick, and is in the midst of taping new episodes of the NBC-TV hit series "A Different World," reprising her role as Dwayne Wayne's mom, Adele. In the past season, Patti made several appearances on that program, starred in a special production of the Truman Capote/Harold Arlen musical "House of Flowers," joined Bob Hope as he welcomed home the troops from Kuwait, and returned to her church roots in the critically acclaimed PBS special "Going Home to Gospel with Patti LaBelle."

In addition to working double-time on her own new album, Patti took time to record duets with some of her best friends in the business, including Ronnie Milsap and Michael Bolton, and joined her "Sisters in the Name of Love" co-stars, Gladys Knight and Dionne Warwick, to record "Superwoman" for Knight's new album.

On a more personal but equally important note, Patti served as



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spokeswoman for the National Cancer Institute to help alert women to the importance of early

breast cancer detection. Working to defeat breast cancer, which claimed the lives of Patti's mother

and three sisters, is a cause to which the caring singer is very much dedicated. She also continues to serve as national spokeswoman for the Black Health Research Foundation, an organization dedicated to battling premature death among African-Americans.

Perhaps more than any other artist in the history of popular music, the distinctive Patti LaBelle has been true to herself in every varied phase of her musical career. In the 1960s, she led the superstar "girl group" Patti LaBelle and the Bluebells; in the '70s, she was the driving force of rock's first all-female band, LaBelle; and in the '80s, her talent as a solo artist dominated the music scene. Patti LaBelle has had numerous hits, from "Down the Aisle" and "Danny Boy" with the Bluebells, to "Lady Marmalade" and "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" with LaBelle, to her solo triumphs, "New Attitude,"

"Stir It Up" and "On My Own."

LaBelle's shimmering talent can be consistently counted on, but it's difficult to predict what she, with her passion for fashion, will wear next or what she will do with her remarkably versatile, flamboyant hair.

And it's virtually impossible to imagine what spoken-from-the-heart musings she will utter, because no matter what she's doing—an SRO tour like the recent Michelob Class Act Tour, a television special such as the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, a top-drawer movie like *A Soldier's Story* or the USA cable dramatization of the Delta Airlines crash, "Fire and Rain," or championing adoption, another of her favorite causes (she was recently honored by the National Adoption Center)—fans can always depend on Patti LaBelle to be unabashedly Patti: caring, good-natured, straightforward.



## MY TUNE

by  
Obataiyé B. Akinwolé

It's a small world after all. Recently I talked with a co-worker who made my day. It seems that while traveling through North Carolina some years ago he happened upon a radio station that "knocked his socks off." The station was WAFR-FM, a now-defunct African-American public radio station in Durham that was devoted entirely to the preservation of African-American music (mostly jazz), literature, and thought.

Before WAFR, I remember the piped-in music of the '60s. It was perfect for the listeners as they rushed through stores and offices. No one ever heard the music but it was always there. It's almost like listening to the radio these days. The same monotony is played hour after hour, day after day. That is why at the age of 10, I bought jazz albums when my friends were buying Motown. But then I bought Motown also. You should ask my wife how I feel about Gladys Knight and the Pips. I liked European classics and enjoyed listening to the music of other cultures of the world. You see, I liked music then and I like it now.

I've often wondered why African-American musicians are appreciated more in Europe and the rest of the world than in America. Even European classics are appreciated more elsewhere than here. The reason is that most other cultures are brought up on a diet of variety. One should always appreciate one's own. But, appreciation of oneself begets appreciation of others. Even radio stations in other countries play all types of music. Michael Jackson, John Coltrane, and Quincy Jones are as famous in the rest of the world as they should be here. It is not unusual to hear a Bud Powell piece followed by Chopin followed by James Brown in Europe. Music is more universal. Have you ever noticed that our African brothers and sisters learn several languages and/or dialects? For the most part, rap is an American thing. It is interesting to note that record executives spend billions of dollars promoting non-musicians while the likes of Gene Harris and Ray Brown play clubs across the country to make a living. I cannot say that rap has no redeeming value, but I will say that our priorities are misplaced.

Real musicians don't play packaged music. They feel. Music to them is more than cramming 20 years of work into three minutes of nothing. Their music has passion. When Horace Silver released "Peace," we all felt the prayer. Of course his music has structure. Probably more structure than most music as we know it.

So, what do we have today? Songs that repeat the melody 1,000 times. We can handle more than that, can't we? Our attention spans are long enough to manage more complex musical thoughts, aren't they? You make the call the next time you listen to good music.



**SEXY BALLADS**—Keith Sweat, the platinum-selling recording artist whose sexy ballads have branded him a favorite among female listeners, describes in "Ebony/Jet Showcase" what makes him "sweet," and sets the record straight on whether he changed his name to fit his career.

## Po' Broke And Lonely Create "The Sex Is On"

Summer's here, and "The Sex is On"—at least if you're Ruthless/Epic recording artists Po', Broke and Lonely, creators of "The Sex is On," an irresistible new single from the best-selling *Deep Cover* soundtrack. It's the third track from *Deep Cover*, which has already spun off Shabba Ranks' top 10 R&B smash, "Mr. Loverman," and the anthemic rap title hit "Deep Cover" by Dr. Dre and Snoop Doggy Dogg.

"The Sex is On" is also included on Po', Broke and Lonely's Ruthless/Epic debut album, *No Money, No Honey*. The album was produced by group member Chris "The Glove" Taylor for Underglove Ltd., with Ruthless Records' Dr. Dre and Eric "Eazy-E" Wright as executive producers. *No Money, No Honey* also includes top-shelf Po', Broke and Lonely originals like "Your Eyes," "9 Litres of Love," and "No Money, No Honey," as well as the L.A.-based group's passionate updates of black love-man classics by Barry White ("I'm Gonna Love You Just a Little More, Baby") and Stevie Wonder ("All in Love is Fair").

After several years of sometimes hard-won music business experience, Chris Taylor met Michael Lynn Stephens and formed an R&B group called Exile. "Although we continued to write songs," Chris says, "we never had a vocalist capable of really fitting into our groove." Chris was producing tracks for a local rapper when he met R.C. (Ruben Cruz Monge), a promising but unpolished singer.

"Originally R.C. was going to be a solo artist, but with so many male soloists out there, he might've gotten lost in the shuffle. I suggested he join my group instead." Chris, Michael and R.C. made a great creative combination when they began writing and cutting demos together. In the summer of 1990, they met Dr. Dre of Ruthless records at a party. A mutual friend told Dre about Po', Broke and Lonely; he asked to hear their demos, liked what he heard, and promptly offered a deal. Four months later, *No Money, No Honey* was finished. "PBL is totally self-contained," says Chris proudly, "and we believe our music can please almost anyone."



**SOULFUL SINGERS**—Eddie and Gerald Levert, the soulful singers who topped music charts with their ballad "Baby Hold Onto Me," are discussing whether or not their first recorded father and son duet will be their last.

## Lil Louis Speaks Of 'Justifiable Pride' In Long-Awaited New Album

"I had to be sure that I loved every song on this album, and I do."

Epic recording artist Lil Louis is speaking with justifiable pride about his long-awaited new album, *Journey with the Lonely*. Refusing to bow to commercial trends in dance music, the Chicago-born, New York-based producer/songwriter/singer has steadfastly followed his own creative path. The result: the No. 1 club smash, "Club Lonely," and a richly diverse album unique in dance music by virtue of its eclecticism, simplicity and soul.

"I don't really consider this house music," says Louis. "People really listen to the messages I'm trying to portray. The people that buy my music understand where I'm coming from. The last album [1990's *From The Mind of Lil Louis*] sold as much by word of mouth as by marketing."

Much of Louis' inspiration for his new songs came "in the middle

of the night," he explains. "I keep a little cheap five-dollar recorder by my bed, wherever I am. At 4 or 5 a.m., I'll wake up with a song in my head and just hum it into the recorder."

"Club Lonely" actually came to me in a restaurant in New York. I was watching all the people in there, their different expressions, and it seemed to me that most of them weren't really happy. You could feel the tension there, like I'd felt so many times in clubs, of people trying to escape or to find what they didn't have in their lives."

The 10 songs which comprise *Journey with the Lonely* were all written, arranged, produced and mixed by Lil Louis; an 11th bonus track, the 7:22 "Jazzmen," is included on compact discs only. "Over 60 percent of this album was played on acoustic instruments," Louis avers. "There's none of that synthesized, computerized

feel. Even programming the drum tracks, I used real drum sounds. I programmed with *swing*, not just a letter-perfect beat."

*Journey with the Lonely* features an entirely new cast of supporting personnel, with the exception of lead guitarist Peter Black, who also played on *From the Mind...* Joi Caldwell is *Journey's* principal female lead, and Louis calls her "an angelic voice. Of all the singers I auditioned in New York, Joi had the most soul—She was not just another screamer." Also featured are Stephanie McKay, who takes the lead on "You're My Reason"; and Barbara Tucker, whom Louis first heard when she was touring with Dee-Lite.

Louis' strong jazz leanings—most evident on "Du U Luv Me," with its indigo-blue trumpet breaks—come from his father, Bobby Sims, a blues and jazz guitarist who worked with B.B. King and Bobby "Blue" Bland. "Plus

when I was younger," Louis recalls, "we used to do what we called 'steppin'; just kind of boppin' to records by Jimmy Smith, Donald Byrd, Stanley Turrentine, Shirley Scott."

"I think of those days often, that's really where I write from. I was taught that musicians are seriously influenced by what we hear, that nothing great happens that's totally planned out. I refuse to listen to the radio. I wanted to make sure that on this album, nothing would simply fit 'the format'—whatever that may be."

Lil Louis was born and raised in Chicago, Ill. His nickname is a throwback to his early teens, when he became the youngest club DJ on the hotly competitive Windy City club scene. After high school, Louis studied broadcasting and advertising at Columbia College, but soon re-entered the DJ arena and ultimately opened his own Chicago dance club.

## American Dance Festival Spotlights Vitality, Style In Latin Movements

**DURHAM**—The American Dance Festival presents a spectacular triple bill spotlighting the incredible vitality and variety of Latin American modern dance. Costa Rica's Losdenmedium and Ecuador's Aulmomonto and Susana Reyes/Moti Deren perform July 16-18 in Page Auditorium.

The presentation of this dynamic trio of companies will allow ADF audiences to see an incredible range of dance—from the poignancy of Susana Reyes and her depiction of Andean women to the awe-inspiring physicality of

Losdenmedium's dance-theater to the magical realism of Aulmomonto.

Aulmomonto, a troupe led by Miguel Azcue, began as an experiment for young dancers and choreographers and evolved into a group creating works based on the fusion of different points of view. Losdenmedium, a daringly physical group, sates as its goal "a special communication with the public through such elements as humor, irony and satire." Susana Reyes, a solo choreographer and

dancer, performs original works set to music composed and played live by her husband, the guitarist Moti Deren.

These performances are made possible with funding from the Rockefeller Foundation.

The July 16, 17 and 18 performances begin at 8 p.m. in Page Auditorium on the west campus of Duke University. Tickets are \$11, \$16 and \$21 and can be obtained by calling the American Dance Festival Box Office at 684-4444. Post-performance discussions will

follow on all three nights.

The American Dance Festival, founded in 1934 in Bennington, Vt., is now in its 15th year in Durham. This year's festival runs through July 25 in Durham to be followed by ADF West, Aug. 1-22 at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City; ADF Seoul, Aug. 1-14 in Korea; and ADF Moscow, Sept. 1-15 in Russia.

The festival is a year-round operation, serving and developing internationally the art of modern dance through performances, classes and education projects.