

STARD ENTERTAINMENT

Mercury rises fast following cool start

"I knew I wanted to sing at a very early age," explains singer-songwriter Eric Mercury. "Everyone else was into sports or something, but I wanted to sing. I literally watched the clock, when I was old enough to legally leave school I did just that. I was into music and at that time there was no such thing as majoring in music at the high school level, so I left."

Born in Toronto, Canada, to West Indian parents in 1945, Eric Mercury took an early interest in music, and by the time I was fifteen was one of the thousands of youngsters listening to the Frankie Lymans and Sam Cookes and Hank Ballards and becoming obsessed with the idea that a singing career was for him. He had been singing since the age of six, a member of the choir in his

father's church, and then when the others pursued other ventures, Eric kept his dream, singing the harmonic melodies of the day wherever he could.

Eric's show biz break came during the Canadian National Exposition in Toronto.

Eric rounded up the gang for an audition with the owner of a tent show. The owner was not impressed with the group, but felt that Eric had potential. "He asked if I wanted to join them," Eric recalls, "so I left."

The show toured Canada and the States, winding up (for Eric) in Florida where Eric left the show. "We weren't getting paid regularly and I had a few bad habits like eating every day."

He returned to Toronto and began singing, around town with various groups, notably, the Soul Searchers. Nothing was really happening, so Eric packed and left Toronto again,

this time headed for New York.

He soon found that was rough.

"I had been told not to go to New York because I would starve. So I couldn't go home and I starved. But I had to stick it out."

In the end it worked out. He was working for nothing in a Greenwich Village Club when a couple of producers came by to catch the show.

"They asked me if I wrote songs and I said 'sure,'" he says. "I'll never forget. They asked me to come by the office the next day and bring them some of my tunes. Up until this point I had never written a song in my life."

He called up a friend, David Clayton-Thomas, and asked to borrow his guitar. Eric got the guitar, bought a music book with 2000 guitar chords in it, and set out to become a songwriter.

"Between Friday and Monday I sat in my washroom - there was a



lot of echo there - and I strummed up four tunes.

He was in the recording business.

"I broke into that office on Monday like I had been playing guitar all my life," he brags. "Went through my tune up, and strummed out the four tunes. They told me they were starting a record company and that they would like for me to be the first artist! I said to myself, 'far out!!!!'"

"When I approach writing a song, I try to deal with things that I see, the truth, experiences that I've had. I have to come from there. And I know a lot of people have experienced the things that I write about. I'm serious about this music, and I hope that it will take me other places."

New jazz greats appear on scene

Jazz, as described by Webster, is a creative form of music---and jazz as we know it is not only the creative form of music, but a creative form of music or singing in association with stalwart performers such as Ahmad Jamal, Houston Person, Melvin Sparks, Ceasar Frazier, and the inimitable vocal jazzy stylings of Etta Jones and Spanky Wilson.

Individually, all of the above artists are recognizable, proven, outstanding performers in the idiom of jazz---and they've paid their dues.

It wasn't that long ago before the tintalizing, bright piano stylings of Ahmad Jamal's version of "Poinsianna" were starting to fade musically when the saxational sounds of Houston Person's tenor stylings held its place in the musical spotlight of jazz, while the vocal stylings of Etta Jones convinced the world, "Don't Go To Strangers."

Commercial music took over and the legendary jazz greats were somewhat pushed aside and forgotten, while music loving America danced to the music of the more popular music with a beat as performed by The Impressions, The Temptations, Chuck Jackson, Dionne Warwick, and many many others providing the hits of that time.

Throughout this musical turmoil, jazz and its exponents were forced to take a back seat, while the nation rocked 'n rolled the nights away, musically.

True to form, great performers fade out of the spotlight of prominence but remain on stage and that's exactly what happened in the careers of Ahmed Jamal, Houston Person, and Etta Jones, who are joined by their latter day musical counterparts in the persons of: Melvin Sparks, Ceasar Frazier and Spanky Wilson, have been banded together to form the nucleus of 20th Century/Westbound's performing jazz artist roster;

Currently and record-wise, Jamal Plays Jamal, Houston Person '75, Etta Jones '75, Melvin Sparks '75, Ceasar Frazier '75 and Spanky Wilson's Specialty of the House say it loud and clear.



Dancers to waltz up the aisle

Tom Jones offers a champagne toast to Wanda Fuller and Eddie Champion who became engaged during Jones' current Caesars Palace engagement. The pair fell in love while on tour with Jones as members of Somethin' Special, a group of six dancers backing the singer. Jones hosted an engagement party in his dressing room between shows. Champion is the son of Chip Cole of the Treniers and his great-uncle was Nat King Cole. The wedding will take place upon the completion of the Tom Jones tour.





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