

ENTERTAINMENT



BREAKWATER

"We were in a guy's basement, looking through a dictionary, and we came across 'breakwater', which was defined as a barrier that keeps water from coming inland. We figured that had to be a pretty strong force and since the band has a big, raunchy, hard-core horn sound, our name evolved from that."

The decision on a group name, as related by lead singer, composer and keyboard player Kae Williams, Jr., may have been spontaneous, but the road to Breakwater's debut on Arista Records was long, methodical, and often discouraging. Although the eight members of Breakwater only range in age from 22 to 25, the band's history goes back a good while, to school days in Philadelphia, to two local bands doing the playground circuit c. 1970. Half of one band, Chain Reaction, went on summer vacation, so the remaining members recruited half of another group and the resulting conglomerate played together for the high school hiatus before splitting up. Four or five months later, that summer group reorganized, started gigging more for fun than for finance, and that was the core of Breakwater.

The group now numbers eight, all natives of Philadelphia: Williams, Linc "Love" Gilmore (guitar) Vince Garnell (woodwinds), Gene Robinson, Jr. (trumpet, flugelhorn, lead vocals), John "Dutch Braddock (congas, percussion). This self-contained unit (on the LP they're augmented by such stellar players as Randy Brecker, Francisco Centeno and Rubins Bassini) evokes the fresh, joyful spirit of R&B's golden era while bringing to the music a contemporary sensibility. There are elements, vocal and instrumental, that they have in common with certain other musical aggregations with whom they will inevitably be categorized, but Breakwater's synthesis, developed over the years, is their own: soft Philly soul, driving funk, sly syncopation, rich harmonic vocals, a combination that is immediate and stirring.

To reach this point on their very first album took time. They opened for many prominent acts (Earth, Wind & Fire, Ohio Players, Manfred Mann, Mandrill. . .), won a radio battle of the bands contest on WIOQ, connected with managers whose belief in the band helped them through some bad times. Kae says, "There were problems along the way, but we never came close to breaking up. Everything could be

figured out, an inner spirituality guided the band, and we didn't let anything beat us down."

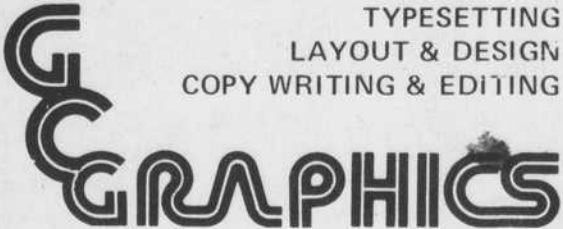
At the beginning of their career, like most newcomers, Breakwater played other people's material, but about three years ago they decided to write their own songs which, when integrated into their live act, went over just as well as the proven hits. Encouraged by their audiences' support, they put up money for a demo, went into a friend's studio and made a tape of songs written by Kae, Greg and other band members. There was immediate industry interest from figures as prestigious as Quincy Jones, and Breakwater eventually signed with Arista, to be produced by fellow Pennsylvanian, Arista staff producer Rick Chertoff.

"Recording is totally different from playing live," Kae admits. "We had to concentrate on breaking our music down to its smallest components. Luckily, we know each other like a book and can anticipate how each of us will approach his part, and Rick got as much feeling and expression out of the band as possible. He made us search for just the right effect, wouldn't settle for less than the best, and kept the work atmosphere in the studio calm and fun."


Breakwater had a tag applied to them back in Philadelphia, "a progressive R&B group," that Williams feels is the best description of what the band is about, how they merge the essentials of rhythm and blues with the advances of the seventies. Breakwater introduces this exceptional band to the world, and their talent and creative perseverance make it certain that there'll be no holding them back.

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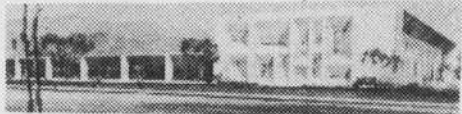
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