

ENTERTAINMENT



RICHARD EVANS

In his long career in black music, Richard Evans has touched every base except one, a solo album showcasing the incredible writing/arranging/producing talent he has demonstrated again and again on other artist's records. Richard Evans, his debut album on Horizon Records, doesn't just tag that final base: it jumps on it with both feet.

In this decade, he arranged three platinum albums for Natalie Cole, including the sizzling Inseparable that launched her career, and scored a solid gold hit for Peabo Bryson with *Reaching for the Sky*. Among his other recent projects have been producing Jerry Butler, Terry Collier, and the soon to be released Valentine Brothers. In the sixties, Evans was a staff producer/arranger/musician for Chess Records in Chicago making hits for such artists as Little Milton, The Dells, Jerry Butler, and The Rotary Connection. Long before Barry White revitalized the idea of big band soul, Evans had chalked up successes with The Soulful Strings. On the jazz side of the fence, his craft was much in evidence on Ramsey Lewis first gold album *Sun Goddess*, Woody Hermans Grammy-nominated *Light My Fire* and on various efforts by Stan Getz, John Klemmer, and Kenny Burrell. Even before these, his roots as a musician and writer are firmly entwined in the careers of greats like Dinah Washington, Maynard Ferguson, Ahmad Jamal, and Paul Winter. Richard Evans has seen and played it all.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Richard grew up in Chicago. At DuSable High School, which boasted of Nat "King" Cole as an alumnus, he got his first taste of band music. Still, that remained only a hobby as he pursued a career in commercial art. After a stint as an illustrator in the infantry during the Korean War, he returned to Chicago. Art was offering him less and less satisfaction and he began to turn to music. He landed a spot as bassist with Lionel Hampton and gigs in Las Vegas. Latin America Europe and Australia followed. Next came writing/playing assignments with Maynard Ferguson and Dinah Washington. Firmly held captive by the music world, he returned to school, graduating in 1960 from Wilson Junior College as a music major. His real education was already well-begun: "With Hamp I learned how to build a show," said Evans, "how to send a crowd into a frenzy and be a showman. With Maynard I learned about precision writing and with Dinah I learned about feeling."

Then it was back to the road with Paul Winter and a series of tours highlighted by a performance at the Kennedy White House in 1962. Next, he joined Ahmad Jamal's trio, with whom he arranged and composed the classic Brazilian influenced *Macanudo*. Work arranging for a platoon of jazz greats and with Chess followed. Despite the acclaim Evans enjoyed within the music industry, his romance with it waned. Offers to teach at various colleges arrived and the idea of earning an MA in music appealed to him as did the leaving the hectic pace of the music business

behind him. He agreed, however, to arrange one last album, the debut of an unknown with a famous name, Natalie Cole.

By the time he had graduated, she was a superstar and Richard Evans was famous to a new generation of artists and producers as the man to put the final key touches on a performance. It was time to move his name from the back of his albums to the front of one of his own.

Richard Evans emphatically re-affirms all of his behind-the-scenes credentials. Complementing material he wrote and co-wrote are Peabo Bryson's "Feel the Fire" the Thelonius Monk classic "Round Midnight" and Evan's biggest hit with the Soulful Strings, "Burning Spear." A funk field marshal, he has artfully deployed close to fifty different musicians through the album: it boasts two female vocal discoveries, Starlett El and Linda Williams (who also plays piano and writes); Eddie Harris startling saxophone;

The man always known as the one person who could give a performer that extra something of which hits are made, has now done that for himself. The result is a revelation. His maxim through all of his past work, Evans says, has been, "Don't emphasize someone's flair. Save that for the high point. Get into their center." On Richard Evans, he shows us his own and the invitation to come in and look around is one of the best you'll get this year.



KEITH BARROW AND DIANA ROSS TOGETHER AT STUDIO 54

Columbia Recording artist, Keith Barrow, who has everyone out on the dance floor these days with his smash hit, "Turn Me Up," recently met singer-actress Diana Ross.

The cameras caught the two vocalists at the famed Studio 54. Diana revealed to Keith that she's in the studio laying down tracks for a new LP, while Barrow told Ms. Ross that he's currently touring the country in support of his new album "Physical Attraction," which includes his single: "Turn Me Up."

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