

# Entertainment

## Richie: His commercial, his cause

By Richard David Story  
USA Today

NEW YORK — "That's OK, we've got nothing but time," says Lionel Richie in a voice as well-tailored and smooth as his silk shirt, sweater, jacket and pleated trousers.

The crowd downstairs disagrees, however. They're here at Area, Manhattan's trendiest dance club, to rub elbows, catch a glimpse or perhaps even hear the pop idol sing a few of his many top 40 ballads.

Not just now, though, Richie's publicists and full-time bodyguard have sequestered him in a private office, away from the paparazzi's flashbulbs, to talk about himself and the Pepsi-Cola deal he's here to celebrate — the one Pepsi president Roger Enrico boasts is even bigger and more comprehensive than the \$5.5 million agreement the company signed with the Jacksons.

"Completely different" is the first thing out of Richie's mouth when asked how it compares with the much-ballyhooed Jacksons' arrangement. Even discounting the big bucks (reports say it's worth as much as \$8 million), the two deals appear quite similar. Richie's spring tour will be sponsored by Pepsi, begins in May and includes 40 cities — ditto the Jacksons. Richie also will compose and perform a Pepsi theme song as well as appear in Pepsi's 1985 television ad campaign.

The difference, argues Richie, is that Pepsi agreed to commit — financially — to many of the causes Richie promotes. But exactly what Pepsi will do neither the company nor Richie will say.

"I want to make more than music. I want to make statements. And I also want to make changes in areas like minority education. For a long time, I've had an interest in talented kids with no opportunities. Unlike a lot of corpora-

tions that merely pay lip service, Pepsi has signed on the dotted line to do something about it."

Richie, 34, spent his first 18 years living in a house on the campus of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, which explains his commitment to education. He says it's also where "I learned everything about music." His grandmother, a piano teacher, played Bach and Beethoven at home. The local airwaves were saturated with gospel and country and Western, and because Tuskegee had a strong exchange program with African and Caribbean countries, those sounds also played a role in Richie's musical development.

But the calypso/reggae dance beat of his current LP, *Can't Slow Down*, especially the No. 1 single *All Night Long*, also owes something to Dr. Lloyd Grieg.

"I was worried about getting the right words and about pronouncing them right. My wife's gynecologist is Jamaican so for a week I was after him. Finally he said,

'Look, Lionel, I'm right in the middle of an appointment, can we talk later?'

Collaboration, in fact, has been crucial to Richie's career. For six



Guastaflo/Gaiella, Ltd.  
**LIONEL RICHIE:** His deal with Pepsi-Cola is worth \$8 million. years he was part of the Commodores. After that, he wrote and produced *Lady* for Kenny Rogers, which just barely preceded *Endless Love* with Diana Ross.

And then there's Brenda, his wife, with whom he "doesn't share enough time." When Richie isn't on the road, his address is a rented house on Rogers' sprawling estate in Beverly Hills — that is until his own multimillion-dollar pad in Bel Air, Calif., is renovated.

## "ALICE" PERFORMANCE TO BENEFIT VISUALLY HANDICAPPED

Sand Productions is presenting an original adaptation of "Alice In Wonderland," written and directed by Lori Kizzia, at the Studio Theatre in the Reed Whipple Center, 821 Las Vegas Blvd. North. The premiere show on Friday, Mar. 30 at 7 p.m. will

"We still haven't had a honeymoon, and we want kids — soon. As my father says, 'After eight-and-a-half years it's time to stop practicing.' But I'm a workaholic."

The noise downstairs grows louder, a fan asks for his autograph. The singer writes, "Stay Easy, Best, Lionel Richie."

"Boy, if I could only take my own advice." But at least for now, Lionel Richie just can't slow down.

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be a benefit performance sponsored by The Friends Of The Visually Handicapped.

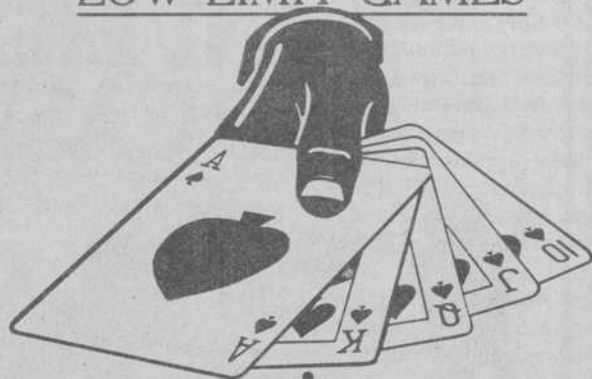
Sand Productions is a theatre dance company (and member of the Allied Arts Council), which produces new and original works. As a non-profit organization, its presentations are produced with the help of grants, generous contributions by community leaders and businesses and the participation of theatre professionals working in conjunction with children, young adults and their staff volunteers.

In addition to the premiere performance on Mar. 30, the production will be presented on Mar. 31, Apr. 1, Apr. 7 & 8 and Apr. 14 & 15 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. and on Apr. 6 and

13 at 7 p.m. only. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$2 for children and senior citizens. Tickets and information are available at the Allied Arts Council, or call 385-7345. Tickets are also available at the Bullocks in the Fashion Show Mall, as well as the Studio Theatre Box Office on the performance dates.

A special performance will be held at the Las Vegas High School Auditorium for the benefit of the Clark County students on Tuesday, Apr. 17. The admission for each student is \$1 and in most instances will be paid for by the P.T.A. of each student's school. Interested school officials or P.T.A. representatives may contact Sylvie Vareene at 870-0690 or Rochel Faigh Wright at 367-0207.

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