

ENTERTAINMENT

HAPPENINGS

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Grassroots News N.W. - In recent interviews, we dealt with traditional jazz artists Max Roach, Dexter Gordon, Sonny Stitt and others. These artists laid the cornerstone for contemporary jazz musicians to create the 1980s jazz sounds for the younger generation to enjoy this musical discipline. Harvey Mason is among this generation's rising percussionist. Harvey gave Grassroot News reporter Lanita Duke, the following interview.

Mason: I began playing in childhood and my early influences were R&B. In grade school, I played classical snare drum and was introduced to jazz in my preteens. From that I interjected myself into all types of music and played for various orchestras.

Duke: Do you have a formal musical education?

Mason: In a way. I went to the Louisville Conservatory of Music and earned a B.A. in musical education. I've taken as much formal education in

Note: As one who will be able to take over where the older percussionists left off, Harvey is tops on my list. Among the musicians of today, he has the background because he treats music as an art form so Harvey's sound gets



HARVEY MASON

more and more complex as he may never reach his limit in his own music because all his time and creativity is used to highlight other artists. I hope, as time goes by, that Harvey will find or make the time to develop Harvey Mason so that jazz can develop into the 1980s.

Funk 'N' The Mason Jar
An Exclusive Interview with
HARVEY Mason By Lanita Duke

music as a studio musician can fit into their schedule. Then there are the bits and pieces that you pick up from other greats in the business like Max Roach, Bob James and Buddy Rich. You learn as you go and as you play. The beat always stays with you as you follow your profession which leads you to always work and improve. When I reach my limit in one form of music there's always another that needs improving. That's the mode I'm in right now.

Duke: Could you define contemporary jazz and what message do you convey in your music?

Mason: As opposed to traditional jazz, the sounds that are coming out today are rhythmically inspired as compared to the harmonically inspired sounds which is the base for all music. Certainly today's music by any standard is less complex than that of some of the great music that was coming out in the 50s and 60s. As far as a message per se, I don't have one in my music. I just want people to enjoy my music.

Duke: Artists in America are classified so that they could be marketed, yet as a jazz drummer you have made the play list in both pop, jazz and soul. How do you explain your conversion?

Mason: That is something I work for because I am involved in lots of different types of music. And I'm not really happy playing just one type of music. To keep my interest aroused, I have to play everything that's out there. But being Black, you're always associated with jazz and rhythm and blues so it was a lot easier for me to start in those areas as opposed to the problems I might have to encounter if I wanted to play country or classical.

Duke: Did you enjoy working on the film production of the Wiz?

Mason: Oh quite a bit. See, I basically do a lot of studio work to pay the rent since "rent isn't heaven sent." Anytime the offer come up to do anything out of the studio, I do it. I found working for the Wiz has left me a much better musician because of all the professionals that were involved in the production, like Quincy Jones. I enjoy doing movies and since that time I worked on a few more. I enjoy working on other people records and jingles. All this put together really makes me happy.

Duke: How do you classify yourself?

Mason: As a musician for all seasons. To produce and create music for all moods. That's the way my albums are. On one side, you want to rock out and the other side you can mellow out. So everybody can relate to my music at any time in their lives.

Duke: Why is it that in today's music, the theme and lyrics are always on the emotional and never on the social, even now that your audience is living a very serious life?

Mason: I think that there are artists that are cut there who do address those needs and issues. The music in general helps people forget and many use music as a balance in this unbalanced world. The artists that put what's happening in their music are kept at a low level and away from the audience. They are in fact, kept down by the people who control the industry, business people.

Duke: Is that bad?

Mason: That's very bad. By doing that, they control the music by controlling what's out there because they control the outlets. I get by because I control my music. And when I play for someone else, well that case is moot.

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—William Glover, Associated Press



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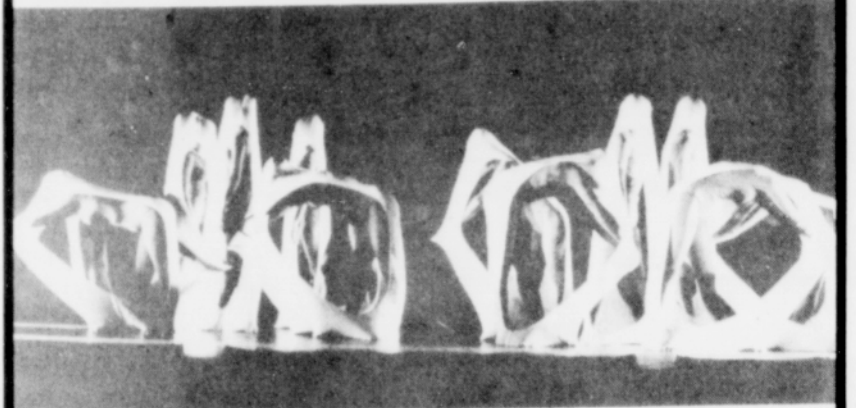
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