

ENTERTAINMENT **HAPPENINGS** ENTERTAINMENT

Grassroot News N.W. - The blending together of different musical styles has certainly altered the direction of contemporary funk and jazz. These musical forms finds itself developing a marketplace versatility which is dependent on the improvisations of the artist involved. In the area of jazz fusion, Jeff Lorber Fusion, is one Pacific Northwest group that has made inroads commercially and musically, into this field on a consistence basis.

Readers probably remember the name Jeff Lorber, since it originally developed from the Jeff Lorber group that played for many years out of a lounge in N.E. Portland. "I had worked in the Portland area with a number of musicians in a lot of different contexts. In 1976, I decided to start and own a band. We had Lester MacFarland on bass, Terry Layne on reeds, the current drummer, Dennis Bradford, along with myself on keyboards."



JEFF-LORBER FUSION

"Galaxian"

By Lanita Duke - Grassroot News N.W.

Lorber explained the group's evolution from a lounge act, into concert touring and recording. "One sure thing I try to avoid in my career is stagnation. I tried over the years to progress and I get into different stylistic approaches to composing and recording. I looked at the recording aspect of the group as a learning situation. In our latest release "Galaxian" I took a lot of over-dubs with a R&B rhythm track laid with synthesizers, horns, guitars and vocals."



MARILYN McCOO

Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr., the Grammy Award winning husband and wife vocal duo, have announced plans to pursue individual careers. Marilyn McCoo made her solo debut at the Nugget in Sparks, Nevada, with Ben Vereen July 23 for one week. Her new show was produced by Lester Wilson.

Billy Davis Jr., is presently in the studio recording a gospel album with Reverend James Cleveland. Both McCoo and Davis have also recently completed solo recording sessions and are currently negotiating individual record deals. They are being represented at the William Morris Agency by Norman Brokaw.

The switch to separate careers is solely designed to allow greater personal expersion within their work, but does not preclude recording or performing as a vocal duo.

McCoo and Davis were original members of the *Fifth Dimension*, one of the top vocal groups of the 1960s and early 1970s. They were married in 1969 and left the group in 1975.

As a duo McCoo and Davis reached the top of the charts with "You Don't Have To Be A Star (To Be In My Show)." The song was certified RIAA Gold Million Seller and earned them their first Grammy Award in 1977. Their album, "I Hope We Get To Love In Time," received RIAA Gold status as well.

They were awarded the Grand Prize at the Tokyo Annual Music Festival and hosted the "Marilyn McCoo and Billy Davis Jr. Show" on CBS.

"I'm very excited about going on my own and I'm also a little scared," said Marilyn. "Billy and I had talked about it at great length. We feel that our marriage is very secure and that by performing alone, each of us will have an opportunity to expand our range that much more."



The Jeff Lorber Fusion, left to right: Denny Bradford, Kenny Gorelick, Jeff Lorber and Danny Wilson.

Lorber is well versed in the entire composition of music and choose jazz as a vehicle for his talents. "The most exciting and challenging direction to go was into jazz. The game is to create music that's commercially successful along with being artistically prominent."

Denny Bradford has been with Jeff Lorber Fusion from jumpstreet. Bradford feels that he adds a level of rhythm to the group, which is the development of his style of playing. "My style is a natural style which developed from my playing format instead of an academic format. I add originality and dynamics to the music as one and this is intergrated into the group as a whole."


The thumping and plucking of the bass is provided by Danny Wilson, who says the synhronization of the bass and drums gives a composer like Lorber something to structure his keyboards around. "We give the solid groove that can be used to lay any track on."

The newest element of Lorber Fusion is the horn section handled masterfully by Kenny Gorelick, along with the vocals and guitar of the musician himself, Marlon McClain. These additional facets of the Jeff Lorber Fusion plays a dominate force while creating another dimension of Fusion music. This observation became a fact in the concert given last Sunday at the Civic Auditorium. The horn solos of Gorelick commended the standing ovation of the audience, and the magic of Marlon funkded the music as well as the audience.

Lorber's maturation occured under and around many of the best of Portland's local jazz musicians. Thara Memory, Lester MacFarland, Ron Steen and Tom Grant. When does the original Lorber tunes come in and not just the reflection of the talents in the area? "In my earlier tunes, it was more derivative than the music I'm writing now. I wrote a few songs in the vein of Chuck and Herbie. You can also hear those influences more readily in my music during those times. Currently, the base of my compositions will be a bit more involved than that," Lorber explained.

He's the synthesizing conductor who orchestrates the totality of his keyboard, along with the talents of his colleagues.

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