

Arts ENTERTAINMENT

The Portland Observer

"My album is all about what young guys and girls deal with, in love, sex, and relationships," says Tony Thompson, known to music fans as the voice behind a slew of hit tunes by the pop/R&B team Hi-Five. "The songs are a little more mature than the ones I did with the group...but that's because I'm a little older now, and I've had a chance to experience some things myself..."

Sexsational is the title of Tony's impressive solo debut album on Giant Records and he explains, "A lot of the songs deal with sex - safe sex, that is! I guess from my time with the group, I've dealt with people thinking of me as a sex symbol, but now I want to take it to another level."

The sensual groove of tunes like "Make Me Sweat" produced by Al B. Sure! and Maurice Pearl, the standout "Handle Our Business" produced by Jerome Jefferson and Dave Hollister, or the nice-but-nasty "Slave" (written and produced by Jodeci's DeVante Swing) are fine examples. "I Wanna Love Like That," the album's first single, was written for Tony by Babyface and features remix and extra production work by Teddy Riley. The song is a fresh breath of romance, as is Tony's hip revival of Stevie Wonder's 1969 classic "My Cherie Amour."

Tony's step into the solo league comes on the heels of four years of hitmaking with Hi-Five. He became a part of the group in 1989, after producer Vincent Bell heard him sing New Edition's "Is This The End" over the phone and, within months, Tony was signing his first record deal as lead singer with

Tony Thompson



the group. The road to that turning point on his musical journey began when the Waco, Texas-born, Oklahoma city-raised Tony began singing solos in the local church choir (under the direction of his mother) at the age of eight. He says, "New Edition inspired me but I also listened to The Jackson's, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder and Donny Hathaway, and I started singing in local talent shows...music was always a part of my life..."

It was at one such show that nationally-known local musician William Walton heard Tony and recommended him to New York producer Bell. After completing a demo with Roderick Clark, Russell Neal, Marcus Sanders and Toriano Easley -- "guys I had known from Waco, not as singers more as guys I'd play sports with," Tony notes -- Hi-Five became a reality, signing with Jive

Records in 1990. The group's career immediately took off with the release of the No. 1 Pop and R&B smash "I Like The Way (The Kissing Game)," produced by Teddy Riley, Hi-Five's self-titled multi-million selling debut included several more hits, including "I Can't Wait Another Minute" and "Just Another Girlfriend."

The 1992 follow-up CD Keep It Goin' On featured more hits (She's Playing Hard To Get," a top five pop single, and "Quality Time") and, in 1993, Faithful, Hi-Five's third album on Jive Records was released.

Now with Sexsational, his much-anticipated solo debut, Tony's ready for a whole set of new challenges. Working with producers like Joe (on "Break It Down"), and The Characters (on "Come Over" with its 'late night' intimate feel, "Goodbye Eyes" and "My Cherie Amour") was, Tonys says, "Real cool. Everyone made me feel real comfortable and every body was down to earth. Making the album was a great experience..."

Tony, manager Jonathan Kinloch, and A&R executive Jeffrey Bowens spent a good deal of time going over songs for Sexsational and the result is an album that showcases Tony's strong vocal skills. Whether he's grooving on "I Know" (co-written by Mary J. Blige and produced by Sean "Puffy" Combs) or given his all on the standout "Dance With Me" with its decidedly old school 'feel,' Tony Thompson lays it all out on his Giant Records debut. Start to finish, the music's on...and Tony? Simply, Sexsational!

Five-Day 1995 Miler Genuine Draft

Waterfront Blues Festival Raises A Record \$161,000 And 69,500 Pounds Of Food For Oregon Food Bank

Oregon Food Bank received a record amount of donated funds and food -- \$161,000 and 69,500 pounds of food -- at the 1995 Miller Genuine Draft Waterfront Blues Festival June 30-July 4. Last year, the festival raised \$125,000 and 45,000 pounds of food.

This year's dollar total includes \$12,000 raised by the Oregon Potters Association, whose members donated and sold hundreds of handcrafted, specially priced bowls and other ceramic dishes in a project called "Empty Bowls." People who bought bowls received vouchers for free soup at several participating restaurants. All proceeds were donated to Oregon Food Bank. Last year, the Empty Bowls project raised \$8,500 for the food bank.

"We are gratified by the success

of this community event, which had the support of thousands of people," said Rachel Bristol Little, Oregon Food Bank's executive director. "We are grateful to those who donated time, food, money and talent to the Oregon Food Bank through the Miller Genuine Draft Waterfront Blues Festival. Everyone involved -- from staff to sponsors to volunteers to festival goers -- has helped make sure that thousands of hungry families in Oregon and Clark County, Washington, will receive badly needed, nutritious food."

Bristol Little said 69,500 pounds of food will feed about 5,200 people for four days. The donated food will be distributed to Portland-area food banks. The cash donations will enable Oregon Food Bank to acquire and distribute at least 1.3 million pounds of food to more than 650 Oregon Food Bank network agencies in Oregon and Southwest Wash-

ington. Bristol Little thanked sponsoring businesses; Event Services, Inc., of Portland, which organized the festival; the talented musicians in more than 45 blues and gospel groups who performed in what has become one of the largest blues festivals on the West Coast; and more than 300 Oregon Food Bank board members, staff and volunteers who collected food and money, packed and moved food boxes, worked at various booths and performed other activities supporting the event.

Major sponsors were Columbia Distributing, Inc., Miller Brewing Company, KGON Radio and Southwest Airlines, ACCESS Credit Unions and Ray-Ban Sunglasses. Other sponsors included Portland Area Plymouth Dealers, Music Millennium, Cascade Blues Association and Dove Bars.

Some things just sound better in Spanish. For instance, take John "Milo" Pro and Octaviano Silva, a.k.a. SF Spanish Fly, a torrid new Latino duo from San Francisco. Rapidly climbing charts and melting hearts even before the premiere of their first album, SF Spanish Fly has already elevated bilingual pop music to an unprecedented level. Now, with the success of their hit single "Daddy's Home," and with their debut Upstairs/Warner Bros. CD Anything You Want ready for release, the buzz on SF Spanish Fly is reaching a fevered pitch.

Together less than three years, SF Spanish Fly reflects the savory cross-current of cultures impacting American music today. Some Latin, some reggae, some freestyle, and a lot of dance and R&B to a long way in shaping the singular style of SF Spanish Fly. Yet more than anything, the distinctly impeccable blend of voices between Octaviano and Milo makes for one of the most exciting young male duos in years.

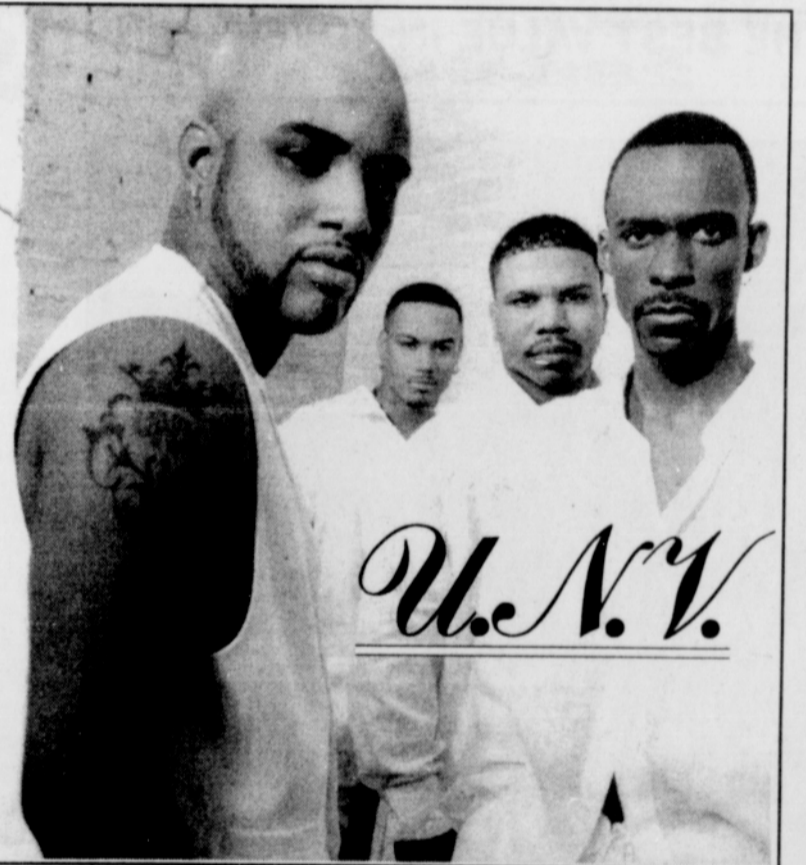
For proof, look no further than their debut album, Anything You



Want. Produced by Milo and Jazzy Jim, the album was written mostly by Milo and Octaviano, with a few classic covers added, including a Caribbean-flavored remake of the Shondells' '60's hit "Crimson and Clover," "When We Get married," and both Spanish and English versions of another '60's immortal, "Daddy's Home." Sung a cappella, the song showcases the band's flair for artful vocal arrangements, and has already broken into the national Hot 100 as an independently distributed single.

Other songs include the uptempo Latin freestyle track "Treasure Of My Heart," the sumptuous R&B ballad "All I Need," the reggae-influenced "Let's Get Together," and the soulful title track, "Anything You Want." Blurring the lines between English and Spanish, the two often alternate languages in the verses of a song.

Yet whatever the style or language, one word says it all about SF Spanish Fly: "Caliente!" (In case you're wondering, that's Spanish for "hot!").



U.N.V.'s "Something's Goin' On" was one of the surprise success stories of 1993-'94. The group's maverick/Warner Bros. Number 1 R&B single, "Something's Goin' On," quickly established U.N.V. as distinctive newcomers among a slew of young male vocal groups with their close-to-gold debut album.

Now comes U.N.V.'s long-awaited second album, Universal Nubian Voices. One thing is immediately clear; there's no sophomore jinx here. The new album pairs singer/songwriters John "J-Ski" Powe, Shawn Powe, John "J.C." Clay and Demetrius Peete (aka Peete) with some of pop and R&B's finest hit-makers. The result is a collection

sure to satisfy old fans and attract a legion of new ones.

"So In Love With You," the album's lead single and video, produced by hitmeister David Foster (Whitney Houston, All 4 One, Michael Jackson), is an instant classic love anthem that was released simultaneously in two configurations--foster's tender pop version, and a tantalizing, soulful urban re-mix by The Mixologist and U.N.V.'s J.C. Affectionately dubbed "The Wedding Song" by fans, both versions of the ballad seem to evoke feelings of love and togetherness whenever they are played.

On Universal Nubian Voices, the music speaks for itself. Among the gems are soulful ballads (such as

the swaying "All I Have"), which the guys vocally finesse like old pros. "Walk Away" and "One More Try" are both harmony-laden wonders, while "What's It Like" is a good, old-fashioned melodic, mid-tempo pocket groove. "Sunshine" is a sparse, thoughtful opus, contrasted by the funky "Peach Cobbler" -- whose sensual double lyrics are quite tame compared to both the urgent "Bring Your Body" and the downright provocative but grooving "Bone." Of course, at the center of all this great music are the magnificent voices of U.N.V.

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