

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

The Portland Observer

Gina Thompson

What do you get when you cross one of the most striking voices in contemporary R&B with the writing and production talents of an 18-year-old musical wunderkind who has already helped produce tunes for the likes of SWV, Total and Madonna? Nobody Does It Better - the explosive debut album from Gina Thompson, that's what.

It's hardly surprising to discover that Gina Thompson was born into an all singing family (with seven siblings) in Vineland, New Jersey, where she went on to receive thorough musical upbringing through both the church and school.

"Everyone in my family sings," Gina explains. "My grandmother and grandfather on both sides sing. My mother and father brought all seven of us into the church. Even in school I was in choirs. I remember when I was nine our school was putting on a production of The Wizard Of Oz and I took a chance and tried out for a part of Dorothy and got it, which of course, meant I had to sing. 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow,' but in a very operatic kind of way."

The dye was cast. The ensuing school years, aside from seeing Gina busy with any and every activity going - cheerleading, track, basketball - also saw her honing her vocal chops to the point where at the time of graduation she was already being ushered into local recording studios



with fledgling neighborhood producers. However, it was a session where her older sister was singing background on a gospel album, produced by teenage musical sensation and protégé of new jack swing king, Teddy Riley - Rodney Jerkins, that Gina made the all important contact that would eventually lead to her landing a recording deal with Mercury Records.

An intense period of writing and production followed in studios around Manhattan, laying to tape a dynamic onslaught of ground breaking hip-hop soul and darkchild funk. "I remember at one point we cut five

songs in one week and that was a lot of singing, believe! At times it got tough and tiring on my voice but when that happened I'd just take a step back and realize that I was doing something I love to do, which is sing, so I'd drink hot tea and lemon and just keep going."

Although Gina harbors a particular fondness for the songs she helped write, most notably "Freak On," a surprise favorite for her is the smooth and funky rendition of Anita Baker's classic "Angel," produced by Rodney's older brother Freddie Jerkins.

"When it was suggested that would be a good song for me to cover, my initial response was 'No way!'" Gina laughs. "My singing style is just so different from her style, but in the end it was probably the easiest and most comfortable song for me to do."

The whole recording process turned out to be a huge learning curve for Gina.

"People sometimes compare me to Coco from SWV and Shirley Mudock but Rodney really brought out the Gina in me. Don't get me wrong, I love those singers but now when I listen to my album I don't think I sound like anyone but me."

Indeed, once, Nobody Does It Better, drops, the challenge for singing hopefuls will surely be to sound like the next Gina Thompson. And believe me, that will be a challenge.

The Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center will present "Cambodia: From Pol Pot to Free Elections," an exhibition of photographs, poetry and ceramic sculpture by Willa Schneberg.

Rick Bartow Lectures At IFCC

The Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center's three-part cultural arts and lecture series, ORIGINS, presents Yurok Indian artist Rick Bartow who will speak about his life and the creative process that drives his work on Wednesday, May 15 at 7:30 p.m. at the IFCC Theatre, 5340 N. Interstate Avenue. A reception and catalogue signing will follow his discussion.

A painter and sculptor who lives and works in his native Newport, Oregon, Bartow has developed an international reputation with solo exhibitions in New York, Tokyo and Frankfurt, and recognition from the Smithsonian Institution, San Francisco's American Contemporary Arts Gallery, and the Oregon Arts Commission.

Bartow has been a teacher, soldier, bartender, and maintenance man. Art was a sideline until about 10 years ago when art became cen-



tral to his life. "I was always doodling here and there friends kept pestering me to do more." Art became therapy for a troubled life that he only hints at.

Bartow's art is essentially visionary, marked by luminous, highly saturated colors and dreamlike imagery. His works on paper, executed in charcoal, acrylic or pastel, burn with an extraordinary passion and intensity. He empathetically portrays human figures that have been psycho-

logically wounded, often merging them with animals.

Another recurring image in Bartow's work is the mask, which symbolizes, he says, "the manifold aspects of our personalities and the masks we wear as people."

Bartow calls these "transformational images" because of the transformative, therapeutic role they have played in his own healing process. "Transitions are a part of my life that I now actively seek. I welcome change now; before, I was afraid of it." Although American Indian spirituality imbues his work, Bartow emphasizes that his vision is uniquely his own. "I am not an Indian artist," he says. I am an artist who happens to be Indian." He accents his mixed blood.

Bartow's work has continued to change growing from an emotional intensity private core.

To reserve tickets call the IFCC at 503/823-2000.

Local Jazz Artist Patrick Lamb To Perform At Andronico's

Restaurant And Bar On Grand Opening Night May 2, 1996.

Portland's own progressive/fusion jazz master Patrick Lamb will assemble a quartet to perform at the public "Grand Opening" of Andronico's Restaurant And Bar on Thursday May 2, 1996 from 5:00 PM to 10:00 PM.



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14th ANNUAL Black Women's Gathering



Saturday, May 11, 1996
10:00 am - 5:00 pm
Guest Speaker

Mona Lake Jones, Ph.D

Seattle's Poet Laureate and Author of "The Color of Culture"

4219 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Lutheran Inner City Ministries

Oregon Alliance Of Black School Educators

The Oregon Alliance Of Black School Educators proudly presents the Fifteenth Annual Student Achievement Awards Banquet on Thursday May 2nd, 6:30 pm, Westminster Presbyterian Church (1624 N. E. Hancock).

This is an excellent opportunity to showcase and highlight the achievement of African American Students who are productive and contributing citizens in our community.

Student selections are made by school administrators, counselors, teachers and staff members. Selection criteria is based on academic achievement, school and community involvement.

This year's keynote motivation speaker will be Art Alexander, Assistant to Commissioner Mike Lindberg.

For more information, call (280-5666) or (280-6167).

First Lady Entertainment Presents Trio of Events



Andrei Kitaev

Sunday, April 28, 1996: Jazz Pianist Andrei Kitaev debut his new CD "Vartan Jazz" Jazz with a Latin flavor or romantic classical side Andrei delivers it all, truly a world class artist... Journeys End. \$15.00 in advance \$18.00 day of the show Two shows 8:00 and 10:00 PM

Friday May 3rd 8:00 PM: Former member of the popular group 'Pleasure', Dennis Springer is "On The Path" the title of Dennis's new CD he will be previewing. Dennis has played with musical greats such as Tom Grant, Jeff Lorber and is recognized by greats like Winton Marsalis and Grover Washington Jr. Dennis is Musician of the Month through the Oregon Jazz Society and is definitely, to become one. Don't miss this great opportunity to be the first to listen to Dennis in full effect on Friday May 3rd. Accompanying Dennis will be local greats Ron Steen and Andre St James.

Saturday June 22nd 8:00 PM: Dorothy Moore kickoff Juneteenth Celebration. \$15.00 advance \$18.00 day of the show. You may remember Dorothy's great single Misty Blue, With Pen In Hand, Funny How Time Slips Away. The sweetheart of Rhythm and Blues has maintained a consistent and well deserved place on the charts with eleven (11) LP releases to her credit that has spun nearly twice that number in hit singles. Don't miss the opportunity to be a part of these great events coming soon at Annie Pearl's Restaurant & Lounge 320 SE 2nd Street Entrance.

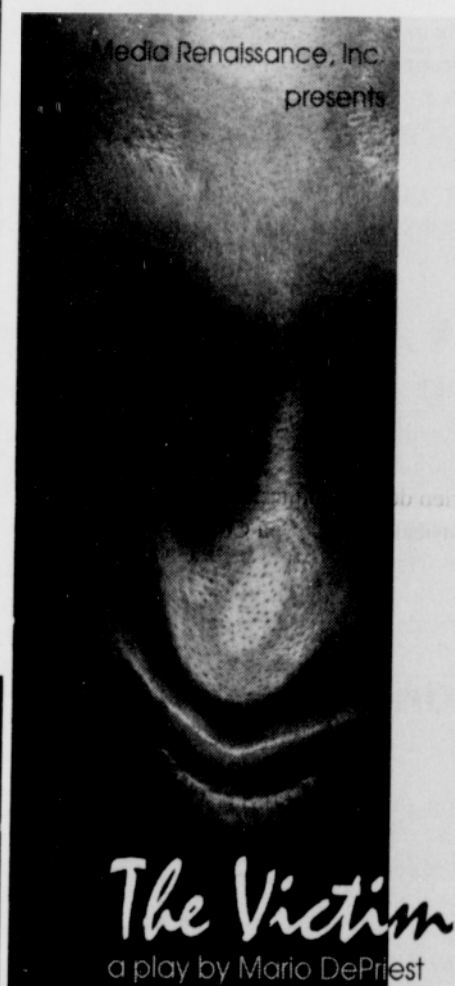
Tickets are on sale at G.I. Joes Ticketmaster or charge by phone (503) 224-4400. For more information call (503) 460-9030 Dee Baker.



Dennis Springer



Dorothy Moore



A murder, a rape... "The Victim"

Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center
5340 N. Interstate Ave.
Portland, OR
May 9, 10, 11, 12
May 17, 18, 19
May 24, 25, 26, 1996
Thurs., Fri., Sat. @ 7:00 p.m.
Sundays 2:00 p.m. matinees
Admission: \$15
Seniors/Students: \$10
Special Group Rates!

Reservations & Information:
503/221-2451

The Victim
a play by Mario DePriest

OREGON SYMPHONY 100

James DePriest, Music Director & Conductor



Jazz with Jimmy and Friends

Thursday, May 9
7:00pm - 10:45pm

Toshiko Akiyoshi, conductor
James DePriest, conductor

This all-jazz marathon concert surely will be THE jazz event of the season! James DePriest has invited some of his favorite artists, including Max Roach and Leroy Vinnegar, to join him in an event not to be missed.

Max Roach, drums
Lew Tabackin, saxophone
Leroy Vinnegar, bass
Mel Brown, drums
Geoff Lee, piano
Dan Faehnle, guitar
Gary Harris, tenor saxophone

TICKETS \$10 - \$35

Media support by: KMHD, The Jazz Station, Willamette Week, KOIN Channel 6

Charge Tickets 228-1353 or 1-800-228-7343 weekdays 9am - 5pm
Ticketmaster: 790-ARTS Mon.-Fri. 9am-9pm; Sat., 9am-8pm; Sun. 10am - 6pm

ARLENE SCHNITZER CONCERT HALL
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