

Arts ENTERTAINMENT

The Portland Observer

He's been called "Boxing's Barnum," "Fighting's Film-Flam Man" and "The Real Teflon Don." He's taken on the FBI, IRS, PBS, ABC, mobsters, thugs, rival promoters, the Muslim community, judges and juries — and usually won. With the exception of Muhammad Ali, he is arguably the most famous man in boxing today.

His name is Don King.
The former numbers runner and convicted felon, who served time in prison for manslaughter, rose from life on the Cleveland streets to become the world's most successful — and vilified — boxing promoter. In his climb up the ladder, King charmed, intimidated and outsmarted most everyone, all while wrapping himself in the liberties and protections of the red, white and blue, often while talking about black and white, and always counting the green.

Ving Rhames ("Con Air," "Pulp Fiction") stars in the title role in the HBO Pictures presentation of a Thomas Carter Company production, *Don King: Only in America*, making its world premiere Saturday, Nov. 15 at 8:00 p.m. (ET)



Ving Rhames playing the role as Don King

Don King: Only In America

K-Ci & JoJo

As one half of the platinum vocal group Jodeci, brothers K-Ci and JoJo Hailey, through such Top 40 hits singles as "Come And Talk To Me," "Stay," "Forever My Lady," "Cry For You" and "Lately," single handedly put the soul back in '90s urban music, with Jodeci easily becoming one of the decade's most influential pop/R&B vocal groups in the process.

Now comes *Love Always*, K-Ci and JoJo's debut MCA album as a duo. The 10-song set, including "You Bring Me Up," the album's funky first single, takes the formidable talents of the Hailey Brothers to an exciting new level, showcasing their abilities not only as two of the most soulful vocalists the hip-hop era has ever produced, but as capable songwriters and producers as well.

True to its title, *Love Always* explores the coveted subject of romance and relationships from practically every angle: When the duo isn't bearing its collective soul via such ballads as the painful, autobiographical "Last Night's Letter" or the yearning "How Many Times" -- a new song written by pop's Grammy Award winning midas man, BabyFace -- with equal passion the two pledge their affections during the tender mid-tempo ballad "Now And Forever," the solemn testimony "Just For Your Love" and a reading of the LTD classic, "Love Ballad," produced by veteran R&B craftsman Mtume, which K-Ci effortlessly makes his very own.

Says JoJo: "I'm not gonna say it wasn't kinda scary at first. You've got MCA looking at you saying, 'We know you can do it,'" but we were asking ourselves that same question.

Then K-Ci got the ball rolling by writing "Last Night's Letter" and that inspired me. I know what the people want musically, because I'm one of the people. I started coming up with melodies and we just said, "Let's Do This."

According to K-Ci, in the studio the recording process had that same seat-of-the-pants energy. "There was no plan. Most of the time, we'd put the track up and start singing. JoJo has an excellent ear for melody and my thing is the funk, the sweat. Put that together and you've got the Hailey Brothers sound."



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It was no surprise to those "in the know" when Rick Braun, acclaimed contemporary jazz trumpeter, flugelhornist, composer and producer, was named "Artist of the Year" at smooth jazz/adult alternative radio by trade magazine *Gavin*. After all, the talented Braun had delivered the #1 smooth jazz album of the year with *Beat Street*, a recording that commanded the top slot at that format for a record-breaking 13 weeks. *Beat Street's* reign at radio had far surpassed that of any other album in the history of the adult alternative format (including Kenny G's duo *Tones* and Dave Koz's *Lucky Man*). And as the icing on the cake, the Pennsylvania-born trumpeter had also produced or played on numerous other top smooth jazz recordings, including label mate Jeff Golub's avenue *Blue* and Boney James' *Seduction*.

Rick Braun's amazing impact at radio began in 1994, when he successfully challenged saxophone players' dominance of smooth jazz radio with his *Bluemoon* album, *Night Walk*. *Night Walk* catapulted to the top of the charts, and helped Braun earn his first *Gavin* "Artist of the Year" nomination. Its success paved the way for a new breed of contemporary jazz trumpet players who take a stylistic cue from such post-bop luminaries as Miles Davis and Chet Baker.

Beat Street, released in June, 1995, placed Braun at the head of the pack once again with a collection of tunes born of what he calls "garage band jams." This is definitely a more spontaneous recording than anything I've done before," he notes. "Instead of sitting in a room by myself, composing the music before going into the studio, I just took my inspiration from a bunch of guys getting together and playing, with no idea of what we were going to come up with."



rickbraun

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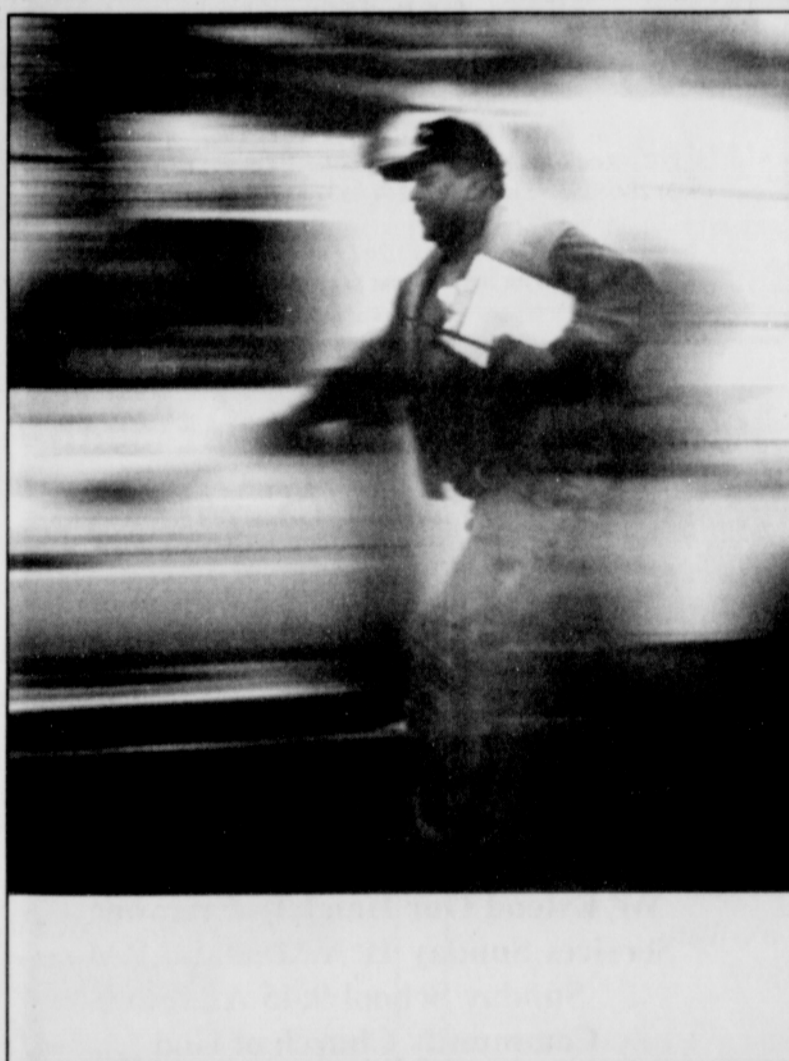
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