

Jazz player performs with style

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The sweet, sensual sounds of the saxophone pervaded The Forum in Harrisburg on a sultry summer evening.

Grover Washington Jr. along with his impressive rhythm section spoon-fed an exuberant Harrisburg audience spicy, new music from a new album; savory, older tunes from previous albums; and, a sprinkling of beloved jazz "oldies but goodies."

Judging by the reaction of the audience to the new music, especially the premiered performance of "Jamaica," *Time Out of Mind* scheduled to be released in October will top jazz charts across the country.

One thousand six hundred people applauded furiously throughout the show; swayed in their seats; and, elicited Arsenio Hall-inspired hoots at familiar favorites such as "Summer Nights," "Shivaree Ride," and "Mister Magic."

The fiery audience seemed to spark the performers, or maybe it was the other way around, in any case the volume of the music and the volume of the thrilled audience reached deafening proportions.

Washington does not disappoint his audience. Bursting with energy from the moment he stepped onto stage dressed in black polished cotton, he gave it all he had bringing each of his four saxophones, soprano, alto, tenor, and baritone, to a beautiful pitch and in complete harmony with his six-piece rhythm section.

On drums is Darryl Washington, Grover's younger brother, proving himself to be one very capable R & B drummer. Accompanying him rhythmically is Miguel Fuentes a very accomplished percussionist who sat amidst dozens of different instruments from the four corners of the Earth.

On lead guitar is Richard Lee Steacker proving he could incorporate fancy footwork into some excellent guitar playing, and on bass guitar is the soulful Basil Farrington.

On two separate sets of keyboards are smiling, true-to-his-name Bill Jolly and the expressive Phillip Woo.

Jolly is such a happy guy and always smiling, said Washington.

"He is the beacon of the band," he said.

Washington and "the beacon" held the audience spellbound with a mesmerizing



Grover Washington Jr. and his band electrified audiences at the Forum.

file photo

duet of Duke Ellington's "In a Sentimental Mood."

Performing for two solid hours without a break, Washington and his entourage maintained the feverish momentum of the audience whose members showed their insatiable appetite for jazz by rising to their feet at the evening's end demanding encore performances.

The standing ovations were well-deserved, and Washington beamed with gratitude.

Encouraged early in life by his musically-inspirational parents, Lillian, who sang in church choirs and Grover Sr., also a saxophonist, Washington began his professional career at age 12 by sneaking into local jazz clubs in his hometown of Buffalo, N.Y.

After high school graduation Washington joined a group known as the Four Clefs and was afforded the opportunity to become proficient on piano and bass as well as to perfect his saxophone skills.

After several more musical endeavors including membership in the 19th Army Band while stationed at Fort Dix, Washington worked with organist Charles Earland on an album entitled *Living Black!* (1971) and subsequently landed the position of studio musician for both the CTI and Prestige record companies.

Recording *Breakout* with Johnny Hammond in 1972 quickly proved to be Washington's breakthrough and gained him the respect of the jazz community.

Twenty albums later Washington is still drawing in and pleasing crowds wherever he performs, and The Forum concert was no exception.

Listening to Washington consistently create a smooth, flawless quality to each number and watching as he effortlessly displayed complete mastery over his contingent of instruments, sometimes playing two saxophones during one piece, it is little wonder he is associated with a lengthy list of credits.

At the 1981 Grammy awards Washington's LP *Winelight* not only was nominated for and won in the category of Best Jazz Fusion Performance while its huge hit "Just the Two of Us" won for Best R & B Song but it also, by year's end, achieved double platinum status.

Washington's cognitively titled album *The Best is Yet to Come* released in 1982 featured two tremendously talented vocalists. Bobby McFerrin lent his vocal expertise to "Things are Getting Better" while Patti LaBelle sang her heart out on the title cut "The Best is Yet to Come" earning herself a Grammy nomination in the process.

Washington recruited world reknown jazz guitarist/vocalist B.B. King to

showcase his personalized musical prowess in "Caught a Touch of Your Love" on the highly-acclaimed album *Strawberry Moon* (1987). Washington's popularity soared after the release of *Strawberry Moon*, and he enjoyed appearances on "The Tonight Show", Fox's "Late Show", CNN, BET and performances at the Playboy, JVC, and Hampton Jazz Festivals.

At the Philadelphia Music Foundation awards presentation held in late 1987 "Best Jazz Album", "Best Artist", and "Best Producer" were all Washington's for the taking.

It is only a matter of time until Washington's newest project, *Then and Now*, achieves the recognition it deserves.

This latest self-produced album provides the listener with three flavorful treats: Herbie Hancock's secret recipe for piano perfection in "Just Enough" and "Blues for DP"; Igor Butman's special ingredient for tantalizing tenor saxophone playing during "Stolen Moments" and "Stella by Starlight"; and, Washington's beautifully blended musical mixture entitled "Lullaby for Shana Bly", a dedication to his daughter.

Washington met Russian-trained musician Igor Butman in 1986 while on tour in the Soviet Union as part of a cultural exchange program. When Butman traveled to the United States the following year Washington seized the opportunity to include him on tour.

Butman's own composition "French Connections" appears on Washington's latest release, and Harrisburg warmly applauded its performance.

Although music is one of his top priorities Washington does not lose sight of what is important in life and consequently dedicates time and talent to numerous charities.

His current concert tour, sponsored by Gortex, is a promotional campaign for an international team of explorers who have begun an environmental exploration of Antarctica via dogsled attired in Gortex outerwear.

Inspired by their conservational spirit and dogged dedication Washington composed and introduced the emotional piece entitled "Protecting the Dream".

Washington and his six-member jazz section look forward to a busy end-of-the-year concert schedule which includes a three-week tour of Japan in October.

Art Review

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The acrylic paintings by Virginia Cohn Parkum in the Gallery Lounge are worth a visit. The artist will talk about her art and poetry at a reception to be held there on September 6 from 7-8p.m., but until then, viewers can guess what the paintings are all about.

The exhibit has a haunting quality. The viewer may have a disturbing sense of identifying with something familiar but not quite knowing with what.

Colors are vivid, often dark, exciting.

One of the more simply colored is titled *Alpine Dream*. Purple-blue mountains are sandwiched between a single shade of green grass and blue sky. The focal point is the apparently floating outline of a human form superimposed onto the serene background and perhaps filled up with it. As with some of the other paintings, it raises the question--I feel it, but what does it mean?

Maybe it's about the effect of environmental purity on man--or the other way around. Maybe the viewer would like to hear what the artist has to say about it.

Parkum's background is in political

science and many of her themes reflect the relationship between art and politics. A large part of the exhibit and poetry deal with the Holocaust and its aftermath.

The painting she is giving to the campus is titled *Liberation from the Golden Calf*. Its subject is "the cry for freedom and dignity in South Africa, and for all people, and the turmoil this struggle entails."

The artist's resume states her perspective:

"We are so constantly confronted by explicit images of great intensity--in newspapers, magazines, the movies, and

on television--that the emotional content is drained, be they images of hunger, war, or beauty. We no longer respond to them; familiarity gradually becomes a protective wall between the image and the senses.

In my works, color, line, and form express the feeling of an image rather than show a visually precise rendition. A dynamism, not pre-structured by totally familiar forms, links the viewer, object, and painting-as-object."

Parkum is an alumnus of Penn State and also has an MA and a PhD in political science.

Her paintings will be on display until Sept. 29.