

Biography

Herb Alpert & the T.J.B.

Herb Alpert—as a solo performer and, as leader of the Tijuana Brass, one of the most popular entertainers of the Sixties—chose to cease recording and performing in 1970, at the height of his career. Devoting his time and energies to the recording company he co-founded, Alpert took a four-year leave of absence from music. In 1974, he ended his hiatus with an album entitled *You Smile—The Song Begins*, which *Rolling Stone* called “a significant musical return ... an impressive maturing of an artist who not only has more to tell but has found a lovely new language in which to speak, soft and sinuous, exotic and sophisticated, tnatalizing, open, elusive.”

As lovely as many listeners found it to be, Herb remembers *You Smile* as a difficult album to make, a tentative move toward the place at which he has now arrived.

It was a lonely album, put together piece by piece in my imagination, done over a long period of time during which I was playing the trumpet with one arm tied behind my back. I forced myself to play; I forced myself to do that album. It was kind of a painful experience, but there was no other way to get to where I am now.

Where Herb Alpert is now can be heard on *Coney Island*, a record which is as much a departure from *You Smile* as that album was from earlier Alpert efforts. *Coney Island* features an entirely new group, an ensemble Herb says is “an inspiration to me.” It contains a diversity of talent and experience: trombonist Bob Edmondson, a graduate of several big bands and one of the original Tijuana Brass; pianist Dave Frishberg, an eclectic jazz-oriented player whose happily coexisting influences include Jelly Roll Morton and Lenny Tristano; steel drummer and percussionist Vince Charles, from St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands; from the Baja Marimba Band, Julius Wechter on marimba and vibes; drummer Steve Schaeffer, formerly with Chick Corea; bassist Papito Hernandez, a veteran of the Cuban Symphony; Englishman Peter Woodford on guitar; and on trumpet, in addition to Herb, Bob Findley, whom Alpert calls simply, “a giant.”

The music produced by this group ranges from upbeat but thoughtful pieces like Julius Wechter’s title tune to excursions both passionate and tightly arranged, like the extraordinary “Carmine.” All of it, from Chick Corea’s infectious “Senor Mouse” to the hypnotic “I Belong,” bears the stamp of an original talent unwilling to be defined by the past.



When I was producing good albums with the Brass, each was a potpourri of things. This album has that same dimension, but with the additional difference of being done several years later. This dimension has different colors to it, colors I've never been in before.

It has guts. It's very spontaneous. It's not "assembled" from my producing experience; it was recorded live, in three days. It's real, it has real things that actually happened, it's much much much freer.

It's not a compromise. It's purely how I'm feeling today. Good or bad, that's the way it is. I feel like I'm finally getting there, doing what I can do. When I listen to it, it sounds like a step to me, but I know I have a lot more to say musically before I finish.

