

March 1991

HERB ALPERT

Musician. Composer. Label Visionary. Artist. Entrepreneur. Jazz Afficionado. **HERB ALPERT** is many things to many people, but he's always been true to himself.

Now that honesty and vision have resulted in one of the most innovative and exciting albums of his career. And that's a career that includes seven Grammy awards, 15 Platinum albums and nearly 75 million records sold worldwide – all for the label he co-founded and nurtured. From the days when Herb and The TJB were butting heads with the best of the British invasion for chart space, Herb has never stopped moving; his music has never stopped evolving.

The new album is **NORTH ON SOUTH ST.** It's a dance album. It's unlike anything Herb has ever attempted before. And that's just the way Herb likes it.

"I was interested in seeing if I could blend in with some of those sounds I was hearing – rap artists, hip-hop," Herb explains. "I thought that jazz would mix nicely with that kind of music, where you'd get this incessant groove going and then this free-ish feeling on top. For the most part, that's what we did – combine those two elements."

"I was just in the right place at the right time," is how executive producer Chris Boyd describes the call from Herb Alpert that set **NORTH ON SOUTH ST.** in motion. "Herb told me he had this idea for a dance record and wanted me to help him pick some co-producers. I made him a reference tape of some dance things that were currently happening to get a feel for what he liked. While we were in New York, we met up with a guy named Greg Smith – who ended up producing four tracks and mixing the whole album."

"You can't really classify this record as anything but a dance record," says Chris. "It's not house. It's not Hip-hop. It's a dance record with flavors from different dance styles and cultures. Herb and four young black producers put this album together – Greg Smith, Robert Jerald, Jimmy B and Troy Staton. These were all unknown kids with no egos – anxious to work with Herb and get their names out there. Everybody came through nicely."

For Herb Alpert, **NORTH ON SOUTH ST.** is everything he wanted it to be. "I'm really excited about it. Every now and then, I listen to my own things for pleasure, and I'm listening to this a lot." The veteran hitmaker has definite thoughts on keeping the music fresh and keeping fans interested. "I think that doing something different than what you've done before is the pursuit of any artist. You're not going to re-invent the C-scale – that's already been done. So you try to scramble it up in different ways. I've always been conscious of trying to keep the acoustic properties of the trumpet intact. I'm playing a brass horn – I just try to change what's happening behind me. Rather than pretending to be something I'm not, I just try to respond to what I hear. If I play what touches me, I accept it. If it doesn't touch me, I try something else."

"It's the same thing with fans," Herb continues. "I don't think people buy me – I think they buy something that touches them. There might be x amount of people who like to look at what I'm doing from time to time, but I think you're either touched by something or you're not. And now, I feel

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touched by **NORTH ON SOUTH ST.** so that's a good sign to me. I've been in this business too—long to get over-confident. But I like it, so as far as I'm concerned, it's already a success."

Chris Boyd likes it, too: "This record is gonna hit damn near every market out there – from his traditional crowd to the new kids. Our people in London are eating this album up just as heavily as we are. And the mixes we have on the first single, "*North On South St.*," are definite club mixes."

NORTH ON SOUTH ST. percolates from start to finish with finely crafted funk and volatile dance beats. The opener, "*Jump Street.*" packs the joyous energy of a South American carnival dance. "When I heard the groove, I started picturing it with a little bit of salsa attached, says Herb. "So I brought Joe Rotondi to add that nice Latin flavor on acoustic piano." "*Passion Lady*" and "*Paradise 25*" are hard-hitting dance tracks. "*Where's Tommy?*" has a voodoo feel to it, with its ominous sliding bass and Herb's horn snarling like a jungle cat. The album closes with the breezy tropical ballad, "*I Can't Stop Thinking About You,*" where the trumpet washes over the listener like a gentle brass rain.

Was it difficult matching his trumpet style to the dense textures and layers of modern dance music? "It's pretty unconscious – mostly right brain stuff," Herb explains. "I always have the engineers ready to record whenever I sit down in the chair with the horn. I just go on inspiration – I call it my close-your-eyes-pick-up-the-horn-and-play approach. To me, that's why it continues to be fun after doing this for so many years. I play at it, but I'm prepared. I still practice everyday, whether I'm recording or not. Because when I'm not recording, I'm thinking about what I'd like to attempt next. I always have a clear concept of what I don't want to do. I don't think I want to be a button maker. I don't want to try and make "*Diamonds,*" "*The Lonely Bull*" or "*Rise*" again... or resurrect any number of things I've done over the years. I like the feeling of people liking my music, that's for sure. But I've always tried to do it on my own terms."