



Monday, June 30, 1997

Alpert kicks brass

**Jazz trumpet player
Herb Alpert will play
the Edmonton Jazz
Fest.**

Herb's homages to past pepper spicy latino show

By MIKE ROSS

Express Writer

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Herb Alpert wasn't the first musical Captain Cook to take music from another culture and make it his own - and he won't be the last.

Jam! Music

But while trumpet legend Dizzy Gillespie is credited for bringing the Latin element to jazz in the '40s, Herb Alpert made it popular. During the '60s, Alpert and the Tijuana Brass dominated the pop charts, at one point even staving off the Beatles and the British invasion.

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Whipped Cream & Other Delights and A Taste of Honey are distant vinyl memories by now, but fans might be surprised to know that the 62-year-old trumpet player's been digging those Latin vibes ever since.

Jam! TV

And he'll never escape the Tijuana Brass.

Jam! Video

Shouted requests for old hits punctuated Alpert's show at the sold-out Westin Hotel Ballroom on Saturday night.

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"So you wanna go retro on me, eh?" he replied with a knowing grin.

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The multi-millionaire musician, a gregarious host quick with the one-liners, gave a sly wink and obliged the faithful by leading his authentic 10-piece Cuban band through a wacky medley of old favorites about halfway through the two-hour show. The crowd of 825, packed like sardines into the ballroom, cheered as each familiar melody marched through a clownish parade. Recast in every rhythm imaginable, the medley started with a big "ole!" and a fanfare and ended some 10 minutes later in a snappy Latin groove that was so fast it was funny. All that was missing was a lady with fruit on her head. The crowd had to wait for the encore for another nod to the past - a loungy rendition of the TB's 1968 hit, This Guy's in Love with You, with vocal stylings by Herb Alpert.

That was it for the Tijuana Brass, kids, now back to the real stuff.

A quick romp through memory lane aside, the true purpose of the concert was so that Alpert could show off "His Band," as it is called, rather like

Paul Simon (another, more modern Cap'n Cook) showing off Ladysmith Black Mambazo on Graceland.

"It's like driving a Ferrari," Alpert said recently of His Band, an apt comparison if there ever was one. With two percussionists, horns, guitars, keyboards and a rock solid rhythm section, they were all incredibly skilled and totally authentic. They were "evil" (in jazz lingo, that means very, very good). Alpert couldn't hold a candle to his Latino band-mates when it came to improvised solos, but his expressive, simple style provided a cool topping to the hot salsa rhythms. The dance floor (gosh, imagine that at a Jazz City concert) didn't take long to fill up.

The show mostly focused on songs from *Passion Dance*, Alpert's latest album, arranged in a rich variety of melodies, instrument combinations and grooves. With exuberance and effortless expertise, every player in the band had his chance to shine. Leading his band like a hip Lawrence Welk (sometimes quite literally), Alpert seemed to enjoy it as much as the crowd. Given how much this guy is worth, that's really why he was here.

In a short opening set of original jazz fusion, Edmonton's own Pazzport balanced self-indulgence with taste and impressive musicianship and came out ahead.

Keyboardist and chief songwriter Andrew Glover was the stand-out soloist (in a show that perhaps had too many solos), leading the quartet through challenging but ultimately ear-pleasing arrangements. While the band at times became background music for an inattentive crowd, at least people clapped in all the right places.

Friday, June 27, 1997

Herb's sprinkled on the top

By MIKE ROSS
Express Writer

In a world where great jazz musicians live in poverty while Kenny G. and his adult-contemporary ilk mindlessly tootle their way to easy street, Herb Alpert stands above the pack.

In fact, he could probably buy the pack.

The 62-year-old trumpet player is by far the richest jazz musician on the planet - and not just because of the success of the Tijuana Brass. Alpert is the "A" in A & M Records, one of the "big six" record labels which currently represents such artists as Bryan Adams, U2 and Sting.



Alpert and partner Jerry Moss sold the company in 1990 for a reported \$400 million US, give or take.

"It was a good sum," he admits with a chuckle, on the phone from his home in Malibu.

Given such a tidy little nest egg, you'd suppose Alpert would feel the total freedom to do or play whatever he wants to. Then again, that's what he's done all along.

"I've always had that freedom," Alpert says. "I've been doing what I've wanted to do for many years, even with A & M. I feel fortunate, sure, I feel lucky. We were in the right place at the right time. But I'm a musician. I started playing when I was eight. Music is an integral part of my life. I see it as a luxury to be able to continue and be healthy and do what I'm doing."

At the moment, that would be immersing himself in salsa. No, it's not a dip - it's a style of music. Playing with his 10-piece band tomorrow night at the Westin Hotel ballroom, as part of the Jazz City festival, Alpert is still in love with Latin music after all these years.

"I guess I kind of lean towards some Latin percussion and rhythms, because I find them to be very sensual and seductive. It penetrates my body.

"I like honest music, wherever it comes from, whether it's country, classical or jazz. I like artists that are really willing to reveal themselves."

Alpert's latest album, *Passion Dance*, proves that he's not just full of hot air. It's a gorgeous collection of instrumental party music that would be perfect for any fiesta. His crack musicians, including three percussionists (he can, of course, hire the best), provide the bedrock for Alpert's distinctive trumpet stylings. It's basically the same band fans will hear at the gig tomorrow night.

"When I'm playing with this band, it's like sitting in a Ferrari," he says. "I'm a little prejudiced, but it's really exciting. I mean, you can't help but move to this music when you hear it.

Just as the Tijuana Brass was inspired by a Mexican bullfight Alpert saw in 1962, his latest venture came after a similar event - a "salsa" concert at the Hollywood Bowl last August. Salsa, he explains, is a style of music indigenous to Puerto Rico and Cuba. It's a combination of a lot of different rhythms, he says, but it's distinctly different than traditional Latin music heard elsewhere.

"I was really thunderstruck by this concert," Alpert recalls. "I was sitting there with 18,000 people, just sitting and watching. And then all of a

sudden, a band would hit a particular groove, and I don't know what that groove is. I just know that I saw thousands of people on their feet dancing. And there I was, like a detective, trying to find out what in the hell was going on. That's what I was in pursuit of and tried to capture on the Passion Dance album. And I think I did for the most part, at least according to my Latin police."

The album is dedicated to "all the Tijuana Brass fans," who, after Alpert pulled the plug in 1968, seemed to drop out of sight. The trumpeter kept going, of course, finding the time to form a record company, build a musical empire and produce everyone from Waylon Jennings to Janet Jackson - all the while continuing to make his own music.

"The people who remember me from the Tijuana Brass whenever I'd bump into them, they'd be surprised that I was still recording. I was always shocked that they had no idea that I was still tootin' the horn. So I think what they liked about the Tijuana Brass was that it was upbeat, it was positive music, it was melodic. And I feel that this music has some of those same components, and those people that dropped out, so to speak, might relate to that."

And if you listen closely to Alpert's solo on a tune called Que Pasa, Mr. Jones? off the new album, you might even hear a snippet from the old days.

"That happened by accident," Alpert says, "and I was all set to take it out and my wife said, 'naw, leave it in. It happened.' I thought maybe it was a little corny."

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