

'SECOND WIND' UNDERSTATES HERB ALPERT'S MUSICAL LIFE

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You'd think that after five No. 1 hits, seven Grammy Awards and nearly three dozen albums to his credit, Herb Alpert might want to give his trumpet a nice long siesta.

Not even close. A label executive and former leader of the Tijuana Brass - arguably the most successful instrumental pop ensemble of all time - Alpert says he practices his horn daily and is looking forward to a summer of gigs here and abroad.

In fact, the title of his all-instrumental new album, "Second Wind," seems to reflect how Alpert is feeling seven years after selling A&M Records, the label he and partner Jerry Moss launched in 1962, to PolyGram for a cool \$500 million.

"I see myself as a jazz spirit, committed to spontaneity," Alpert said. "So, for these past several years, I've done what I've always done - played my trumpet every day, exploring ideas and listening for rhythms that could fuel those ideas even further."

"Second Wind," co-produced with fusion keyboardist Jeff Lorber, is Alpert's debut for Geffen-distributed Almo Sounds, the label he and Moss started two years ago.

"After we sold A&M, there were no thoughts of starting something new," Alpert said. "But what happened was, my partner got excited about getting back into business by starting small and having just a few select artists. But I don't get involved in the day-to-day running of the label."

Almo boasts an intimate and interesting roster that includes fast-rising alternative act Garbage and the highly regarded country newcomer Gillian Welch.

Alpert and Lorber, who met last year when they collaborated on a track for a Christmas album benefiting the Special Olympics, appear tonight at the House of Blues in West Hollywood.

"I like the feeling of playing the smaller places," the 61-year-old Alpert said. "I want to be able to see the audience. Playing live is one of the ingredients that was missing from my life. I was a closet trumpet player."

Lorber is best known for his '80s contemporary jazz group the Jeff Lorber Fusion. He has since produced Kenny G and Dave Koz and remixed tracks for U2, Bruce Horns-by and Luther Vandross.

"I never think about radio to start with," said Alpert, who grew up in the Fairfax district of Los Angeles and is married to singer Lani Hall. "I just play the type of music that comes out of me. This new album is a compilation of all the things I've done and seen all these years."

Alpert got his first break in the business in his early 20s when he and writing partner Lou Adler were hired as staff composers for rock 'n' roll producer Bumps Blackwell.

The pair penned four top-40 hits - "Wonderful World," "Only Sixteen," "Love You Most of All" and "Everybody Likes to Cha Cha Cha" - for Sam Cooke.

In 1962, Alpert split with Adler and joined Moss, then one of the industry's top independent record promoters, to form Carnival Records, which they renamed A&M (based on their surnames). The label first operated out of the garage at the Alpert family home near Fairfax High School.

Later that year, Alpert hit upon a distinctive sound by double-tracking his trumpet parts on the instrumental "Twinkle Star," which he renamed "The Lonely Bull" after overdubbing crowd noises from a Tijuana bullfight. The single, recorded for \$200 and released on A&M under the Tijuana Brass (TJB) moniker, soared to No. 6 in the pop charts and established Alpert and A&M.

The TJB album, "Whipped Cream & Other Delights," spent two months at No. 1, and Alpert remained in the top 40 through 1987, with such hit singles as "Taste of Honey," "This Guy's in Love With You," "Rise" and "Diamonds" (with vocals by Janet Jackson and Lisa Keith).

A&M, of course, quickly became one of the world's top labels, fueled by the success of Jackson, the Carpenters, Sting, Supertramp and Carole King, among others.

During his current tour, Alpert will perform material primarily from "Second Wind," his 33rd album, but has rearranged a couple of TJB tunes to fit the contemporary jazz sound.

"I like staying current," he said. "Putting the Tijuana Brass back together is not something I would ever think of doing."

When not making music or developing talent for Almo, Alpert oversees the Santa Monica-based Herb Alpert Foundation, which helps with cultural or educational projects he feels are important.

Asked whether jazz education in local schools might be a worthy cause, Alpert is optimistic the music is attracting young people all by itself.

"I don't feel jazz is stagnating," he said. "People are doing wonderful things on its behalf. Wynton Marsalis, for one, is waving the flag nicely, bringing people to the music all the time. Jazz is a very engaging art form.

"It's honest, and people today are looking for honesty."