

## HERB ALPERT

**H**erb Alpert says, "I don't believe you can force anything to happen, but you can create an environment for it to take place."

Earlier this year, Alpert did exactly that when he fused with South African flugelhorn player Hugh Masekela, on their duet album, *Herb Alpert & Hugh Masekela*. Many assumed that the musical marriage would be short-lived, but someone forgot to tell Alpert and Masekela.

Following the success of *Herb Alpert & Hugh Masekela*, which made its presence felt on the pop and jazz charts, and a critically-acclaimed national tour of major clubs, the two have combined for their second A & M album, *Main Event*.

*Main Event* is a live album featuring live recordings from the duo's sell-out performances at the Roxy Theatre earlier this year, and material recorded live on the A & M Soundstage.

Says Alpert, "Hugh and I wanted to continue the spontaneity we experienced on our first album. And because of the concerts and audience response, we didn't feel we could create that same atmosphere in the studio. It seemed natural that we should record a live album."

Unpredictable, like the musicians themselves, their music continues to exude the spontaneity, high-bred emotion, and tasty rawness that earmarked their first album—with the added bonus of exuberant live energy.

Alpert has deceptively been easing into new musical areas in the past two years as producer of albums for A & M recording artists Letta Mbulu and Gato Barbieri. His work with Mbulu, Barbieri, and now Masekela, accents his own keen sense of improvisation and timing, his affection for Afro-latin rhythms, and his ability to move freely and competently in a myriad of musical settings.

Besides his work with Masekela, Alpert was also executive producer on Les McCann's first album for A & M, and also served as executive producer on songwriter/singer Richard Kerr's latest album. Some of Kerr's most recognized works include, "Mandy,"

and "Looks Like We Made It," which were recorded by Barry Manilow.

While Alpert has once again jetted to the forefront of contemporary music, he also maintains his identity as Vice-Chairman of A & M Records, which he co-founded with its Chairman, Jerry Moss.

A & M Records last year iced their 15th Anniversary, marking their growth as the most successful independently distributed record company in the world. During their annual conventions this year, Alpert and Moss re-emphasized the importance and integrity of recording artists to A & M Records, and also celebrated the opening of their own branch distribution facilities across the country.

Alpert, a native of Los Angeles, and son of an immigrant Russian father and a Hungarian mother, began playing the horn when he was eight. He spent part of his teens serving in the Army (1956) and then hustled as a songwriter in the late 50's with his partner, an insurance salesman named Lou Adler.

Alpert and Adler songs were first recorded by Sam Cooke. They also produced bubblegum records, including Jan & Dean's "Baby Talk," and even tried recording themselves with a cover recording of "Alley Oop," under the ghost of Dante & The Evergreens. Alpert later recorded solo for RCA under a second cover, Dore Alpert, after the two had parted amicably.

In those struggling times, Alpert had already established his own philosophy towards the record industry, particularly regarding record companies. "If I ever had a record company," he remembers saying, "I would definitely give more importance to the artist, because it centers around the artist."

It had to be an omen, because in 1961 he met a climbing West Coast promotional man named Jerry Moss, and the two shared the brain-storm of wanting to form a "little" record company. The company was christened A & M, for the obvious—and it's still making history.

Most people don't realize that A & M Records was launched initially as a result of a casual visit to Tijuana. And that an Alpert rendition of "Twinkle Star,"

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(a proposed debut single), was changed during a bullfight and laced with a Latin-style backdrop. When the trip was over, "Twinkle Star" had become "The Lonely Bull," with an intro of crowd cheers and exuberance.

In August of 1964, "The Lonely Bull" became the debut single for the infant A & M label and Alpert—and the single produced sales over 700,000 copies. A & M Records was off and running—and so was Alpert & The Tijuana Brass.

The debut album, *The Lonely Bull*, was released in December of the same year, and by 1965, the fourth Alpert & Tijuana Brass album had been released, *Whipped Cream & Other Delights*.

The Alpert sound had developed into gargantuan proportions. The single, "A Taste of Honey," off the just mentioned album shot to number one in the summer of '65. With that impetus, the album produced sales of over 8,000,000.

Alpert & The Tijuana Brass probably reached their peak the following year when they accomplished a still unmatched coup of *Billboard's* best-selling album charts. In the landmark April 16 charts, Alpert had cemented the #1, #3, #6, #14, and #17 positions, a record five albums in the Top 20.

Alpert soon turned his attention and concentration toward the burgeoning giant A & M was becoming. Following the impact of Woodstock and the decline of "acid-rock," a progressive rock sound developed,

surging into the 70's, and at the forefront of that transition were a number of A & M discoveries, including Cat Stevens, Fairport Convention, Quincy Jones, Free, Spooky Tooth, Karen & Richard Carpenter, Paul Williams. Quincy Jones' first album, *Walking In Space*, won a Grammy Award.

And today, A & M still retains a unique and successful roster of artists from Peter Frampton, The Carpenters, Quincy Jones, Rita Coolidge, to recent hit-makers like Joan Armatrading, The Brothers Johnson, Pablo Cruise, Chuck Mangione, Styx, L.T.D., and many others.

The unpredictable character of Alpert had never subsided, and in 1974, he went back into the studio with the Tijuana Brass to record "The Legend Of The One-Eyed Sailor," a tune written by Chuck Mangione, which led to an album, *You Smile—The Song Begins*, a tour with the Brass, a follow-up album, *Coney Island*, in 1975, and Herb's first solo album, *Just You and Me*, in 1976.

The Barbieri and Mbulu albums channeled his resources back into producing, but only momentarily before pursuing the projects with Masekela.

Now, with *Main Event*, Alpert once again broadens his musical horizons. Visceral, fun, superbly musical, the album is a fine representation of two great musicians.

Alpert. Masekela. Together again. In more ways than one.



## HUGH MASEKELA

**H**ugh Masekela was born in Whitbank, a small town about 100 miles east of Johannesburg in South Africa. His childhood was predicated by racial tension and foreign occupation of the very land he was raised on. Whitbank, the home of his grandmother and grandfather (a Scottish mining engineer) was taken over for its endowment in rich natural mineral resources. The Blacks who occupied the land were put in townships to serve the cities, and Masekela's family was placed in a township named Soweta.

Raised mostly by his grandmother, who operated a local drinking house, Hugh made his first attempt at piano lessons at the age of nine, after he had rejoined his parents in Johannesburg. His parents were avid music listeners, as Hugh revealed. "South Africa has always been a very active country musically; records and gramophones were always available."

Hugh's early musical influences were for the most part American, as much as African; "We grew up with American movies, from the Lone Ranger to Humphrey Bogart. I knew America through records and films.

"Louis Armstrong, Glen Miller, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Patti Page, the Andrews Sisters, Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, that's what my parents used to listen to and I knew all of the lyrics to their songs".

Of course, although music was an integral part of the people, aspiring young musicians weren't exactly encouraged, laughs Hugh. "Johannesburg was a soccer town, and at that time, if you took piano lessons you were considered a sissy.

"It was either soccer, boxing or dance music, which you danced to but didn't play—so I went to high school to become a good soccer player."

His proficiency as a soccer player was well above-average, but his desire to play music took priority. His first trumpet was a contribution, given to him by a group of South African Liberals, who helped to encourage home-grown musical talent.

The head of the school was Father Huddleston. After Huddleston was expelled from South Africa by the government for his political views, he passed

through America and met Louis Armstrong and told him about Hugh's first band in South Africa. Satchmo responded by giving the Father a trumpet to send back to Hugh—the delivery of which became a major media event since Armstrong was a god in South Africa. Says Hugh, "My group played a kind of cool West Coast African jazz and one of the guys in the group turned me on to Clifford Brown."

He later became a side man with Kippie Moeketsi (whom he calls the Charlie Parker of South Africa) along with Miriam Makeba in 'The Kong Band.' He worked his way through a number of African groups (The Manhattan Brothers, the Skylarks), and later played with visiting foreigners June Christie, Bud Shank, Bob Cooper and Tony Scott.

Eventually, a friendship with John Dankworth and Cleo Laine led to a musical scholarship in England, and later an opportunity to visit the States.

Hugh first came to the States in 1964 through a scholarship set up by Harry Belafonte. "I came right after the Communist scare. Kennedy was campaigning, the Civil Rights Movement was active, Khrushchev was giving 10 hour speeches and beating his shoes on a U.N. podium—it was a big adjustment for me."

He worked for and did his first real recording with Belafonte and Miriam Makeba as an arranger and producer before forming his own group with fellow students Larry Willis (Blood, Sweat & Tears) and Henry Jenkins. He did his first album for Mercury Records in 1963 with Hugo Montenegro, and did his first solo album with producer Ed Townsend for the same label.

Hugh spent four years at the Manhattan School of Music and was in the company of a number of today's leading contemporaries including Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Donald Byrd and Larry Willis.

His first major recording hit came in the spring of 1965 with the release of his first MGM album, *The Americanization of Ooga-Booga*. At the time Hugh was living on a \$2,500 advance downtown in a loft in New York; he had just been through a divorce, and he

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recalls candidly, "I spread the money over a whole year. I just bought a lot of jeans."

The album started making some noise in Los Angeles and Hugh was invited to perform at the first Watts Summer Festival in 1966.

After receiving a great reception, he decided that things could be better for him in California and he sent for his closest friend and ex-Manhattan School of Music classmate, Stewart Levine.

Together they formed Chisa Records in the fall of 1966. Later friends Letta Mbulu and Caiphus Semenya joined them in California.

After one album on Chisa entitled, *The Emancipation of Hugh Masekela*, they sold Chisa to Uni Records. Hugh's first record on Uni was *Grazing In The Grass*, which sold over 4 million records worldwide.

Record company problems developed and Hugh's recording career stopped for a period during which time he became involved with the Jazz Crusaders.

Chisa was reformed in 1970 and the Crusaders along with Letta Mbulu and Masekela recorded a number of albums for Motown, which was distributing Chisa.

Finally, after being overly saturated by record company pressures, Hugh went on a sabbatical to Africa where he began working with and producing young African talent. His return to the States brought new energies.

In 1977, Herb Alpert, whose Mexican-flavored music with the Tijuana Brass had helped inspire Hugh Masekela in his efforts to introduce African music to the American public, decided to do an album together.

Says Hugh, "*Herb Alpert & Hugh Masekela* had a very contemporary feel. It was influenced by an African urban beat and also heavily influenced by Brazilian music. It had a very happy feeling; that record definitely had a smile on it.

"And our live album, *Main Event*, is even better because we've grown so much since then," says Hugh. "We were just experimenting and feeling our way, but when you play with someone for awhile, you naturally develop a better sense of timing and a tighter sound.

"The key is that we are not locked into a certain sound. When you're playing live, things just happen. That is the uniqueness of what Herb and I are doing. We're playing what we feel."



Herb Alpert & Hugh Masekela:

## MUSIC'S NEWEST MARRIAGE DO IT LIVE ON "MAIN EVENT"

**F**ive years ago Herb Alpert and Hugh Masekela were little more than outright strangers. Today, recording as a duo, they are one of the most exciting surprise stories to hit the music scene this year.

Their coincidental fusion led to their first album, *Herb Alpert & Hugh Masekela*, released earlier this year, a well-received national tour of major clubs, and now their second album, *Main Event*, which was recorded live.

*Herb Alpert & Hugh Masekela* served as a tasteful introduction to a musical marriage that has proven to be very compatible in these early stages. The album, which blended Alpert's trumpet and Latin rhythms with Masekela's fiery flugelhorn and Afro jazz improvisation, registered in the Top 20 of the jazz charts and also showed cross-over strength in the pop charts.

"Hugh opened a new door for me," says Alpert, "We're both very spontaneous players, and that first album was very organic. We were looking for a new form, an environment that we both would feel comfortable and excited about."

Advises Hugh, "The fortunate thing is that the music came out like we hoped it would. If we liked something we played it, whether it was a melody from Patagonia, from Bulgaria, the Congo, or the lower East Side."

The success of that initial album sent Alpert and Masekela on their first national tour, and Alpert's first live performances in over four years. Audience response to the duo live, was even more resounding than their initial album success.

Says Alpert, "The audiences were great, and it's because of our concerts that we decided to record our live album. We went into the studio after the tour, but we didn't feel we were capturing the essence of our live performances. Recording live seemed to be the natural thing to do, and the only way to capture the spirit."

*Main Event*, released in early September, features live material from their sold-out engagement at the Roxy Theatre in Los Angeles, as well as material recorded live on the A & M soundstage.

Alpert and Masekela co-produced the set with stand-out trombone player Mosa Jonas Gwangwa, also Masekela's cousin, who drew individual praise during their last tour. Gwangwa has written most of the tunes on the album, while Alpert contributes his own composition, "I'm Comin' Home."

Alpert, Masekela, and Gwangwa, are joined by fellow musicians, David Williams on bass, Buddy Williams on drums, Larry Willis on piano and Arthur Adams and Jeff Sigman on guitars, and Manolo Badrena on percussion, all of whom toured and recorded on the duo's first album.

While Alpert and Masekela continue to pursue their own independent directions, making the marriage work remains their focal point. Masekela is expected to do some solo projects for A & M in the future, while Alpert has executive produced upcoming albums by Les McCann and Richard Kerr (who wrote Barry Manilow's hit, "Mandy"), which will be released on A & M Records.

The two, who had only been fleeting acquaintances, finally met when Alpert, while trying to reach producer Stuart Levine, accidentally spoke to Hugh, who was guesting at Levine's Los Angeles home. Levine is a long-time business associate, and has produced many of Masekela's past albums.

Says Hugh, "We knew we were compatible as players because we came from the same direction as far as recorded music is concerned. We felt that we could luck up, so everything has been a bonus in the way things have turned out.

"We surprised ourselves, and I think that a lot of other people have been pleasantly surprised too."

There's no doubt that the public has cast their vote, and Herb Alpert & Hugh Masekela look like they are going to be a main event for some time to come.