

Allan Harris

During these days of pyrotechnic pomp and flash, it is refreshing and compelling that the simple, soulful and swinging sound of the great jazz singer is alive and well with Allan Harris. "At a time when the number of talented male jazz vocalists under the age of sixty is hard to come by, the emergence of Allan Harris is a happy event," reports Scott Yanow in "La Jazz Scene".

Born in Brooklyn, Allan was surrounded by music. His mother was a classical pianist and his aunt was an opera singer, who also owned a soul food restaurant in Harlem. As Allan grew so did his musical enthusiasm. By the age of 12, he was studying classical guitar with Vladimar Bobri, President of the Classical Guitar Guild. He was also spending a great deal of time at his aunt's restaurant where all the jazz greats stopped in after the gigs at the uptown clubs. Allan would listen to them for hours tell their tales and express their dreams. On Sundays, his mother would take him to the Apollo, and it was during this time that Harris made the decision that he would be a musician.

His family moved to Pittsburgh, when Harris was 16. "I really honed my craft in Pittsburgh. It's such a breeding ground for great musicians such as Ray Brown, Stanley Turrentine, Art Blakey, Eddie Jefferson and George Benson just to name a few. But most of them made their mark after they left Pittsburgh so after college I moved to Atlanta where I did an R&B thing, but I wasn't growing as an artist." Tony Bennett was instrumental in Harris' move to New York. Harris was opening for Bennett who was so impressed with him, he told him to move back to New York where he belonged. In fact, Bennett opened his apartment to him as well as many musical doors.

Besides his busy touring schedule, Harris is currently working with trumpeter Jon Faddis and librettist Lee Breuer on the jazz opera: "LuLu Noir", which is based on a German play of a prostitute who is befriended by an older man. The project was premiered at the Philadelphia Mellon Jazz Festival on June 9, 1995 casts Harris in one of the lead roles and also features vocalists, Jon Hendricks, Kevin Mahogany and bassist Milt Hinton.

In 1995 Harris released his debut album "It's A Wonderful World" on Mons Records. He has convened an impressive cast: Benny Green on piano, guitarist Mark Whitfield, Jeff Hamilton on drums with Claudio Roditi on trumpet and Tom Varner on French Horn and featuring bassist Ray Brown. "Having Ray Brown on bass, well I can't begin to tell you what a treat that was," says Harris, "After all Ray was there, working with the greats like Ella. He was a real inspiration for me." The album became a good success and was followed up by "Here comes Allan Harris and the Metropole Orchestra" which showed him singing jazz standards in an orchestral arrangement.