

GREG ADAMS

TRUMPET EXTRAORDINAIRE

■ CICILY JANUS

For the last three decades, Grammy and Emmy nominated trumpet player Greg Adams has built his career as a musician from a backup horn player to a well-known powerhouse in the industry. Adams has recorded six solo albums, three albums with East Bay Soul, and fourteen albums as one of the founding members of the band, Tower of Power. As an arranger, he helped bring Tower of Power into one of the most recognizable and sought out bands in the country. In addition to his innumerable collaborations in the studio and on stage, Adams' debut recording, "Hidden Agenda" placed number one on the Billboard charts and stayed there for over five weeks.

His latest musical pursuit is with the group, East Bay Soul. East Bay Soul brings a much-welcomed group of talent to the music industry. With their mighty horn section and magnificent orchestrations, their albums have been a collection of hit after hit. Their latest work, "That's Life," features a collection of eleven songs that mingle the vintage soul sounds with today's pop. Loyal to their original voice as a band, East Bay Soul is one act jazz/funk and music enthusiasts will love. Bringing his story to life, CoffeeTalk Jazz Magazine's own Bridgette Lewis recently had the chance to interview Adams and learn about his passion and most notably, the inspiration behind the living legend.

Q: When I listen to music, it transports me to a different place and time. Do you feel that music, for you, is a marker of memories?

A: Absolutely. Music can come in the form of being on stage at a certain point and having one of those magic moments in a performance with my fellow musicians.



When that happens, it's truly magical. Or it can be when I'm attending a concert and having that magic moment happen as you're listening to a performer on stage somewhere like symphony hall. I remember the first time I heard the recording of Dvorak's "Symphony for the New World." It was like...wow! That was pretty cool. And to this day, when I listen to it, it reminds me of the first time I heard it and the impression it made on me. I heard it in high school, so that's how far the memory goes back, but everybody has memories of what they have experienced. Whether you're a performer or a concertgoer, you can experience it both ways. Everybody who has a wife or a life partner can relate to, "They are playing our song..." that is truly a milestone.

Q: What's the most important lesson you learned from working with and collaborating with other artists?

A: Music is like having a conversation with other musicians; especially when playing jazz. It's all about communication between the players. In my role as an arranger, I'm there to enhance the artist's song and performance through the orchestration I'm doing for them. In doing so, I need to become a chameleon and adapt to their style while giving them my signature sound. Over the years and on over 700 record dates I'm fortunate to have a pretty good batting average.

Q: Tell us about a life-defining musical moment?

A: The night I played “My Father’s Place” on Long Island and later met my wife, Andrea. Another time was conducting the orchestra on “Just When We Start Making it,” “Time Will Tell,” and the arrangement for “Below Us All the City Lights,” on the Back to Oakland album by Tower of Power. At anytime in my career it’s always been a thrill to conduct an orchestra. I’m very fortunate to have had many of those moments in my career.

Q: What lessons do you want listeners to pull from your lyrics?

A: I’m not much of a lyricist but I do know that lyrics are all about the story that is being told along with the music. When I work with a lyricist, I give them a storyboard as a jumping off point and let the creative process of the story begin. I don’t think it’s so much about the lessons as it is more about making a connection with the listener. The words and music always go hand-in-hand.

Q: You’ve worked in various idioms of the music business, i.e. TV, composition, arranging, producing and performing. Do you have any area that you prefer to work in?

A: I love every aspect of the different idioms I work in. Each one brings a different set of challenges but the one thing they all have in common is the gratification of hearing the finished product.

Q: How important is it for a musician to be musically diverse in his or her career?

A: It is essential to be able to wear several hats in the business. Good sight-reading skills are a music if you’re going to be a session player because you’ll never know what will be on the stand when you arrive at the studio. I have worked in practically every aspect of styles in music. R&B, Jazz, Funk, Pop and Rock are where I’ve lived for more than 45 years. It’s that diversity that’s kept me in the loop for so many years. It’s also a good idea to get a degree in music education so you can teach. Teaching, I believe, can end up being one of the most diverse things you can do.

Q: As a seasoned musician you’ve seen the music climate change over time and watch record labels shutdown. What advice do you have for the new artist that wants to start an independent music career?

A: In the beginning of the era of independent record labels, it was very difficult. It was kind of like the Wild West. But over the years it has become much easier to record, manufacture, market and distribute your music. Crowd funding has become the new way to fund a recording project and Amazon, CDBaby, and iTunes are great for distributing your product. Plus, going this route gives you a much better handle on the financial end of things.

CoffeeTalk Jazz Magazine would like to thank Greg for his interview and contributions as an artist to the music industry as a whole. To find out more about Greg including social media links, tour dates, album launches and more, go to his website: www.gregadamsmusic.com



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