

PETER WHITE BIOGRAPHY

Over the past 16 years, as Peter White has kept thousands of smooth jazz fans worldwide enthralled by his spirited melodies, soulful grooves and inviting, instantly recognizable acoustic guitar tone, he's always had a blast finding unique ways to bring his modern sensibilities to cherished pop classics. Thanks to the smooth jazz format's affinity these days for instrumental cover songs, two of the incredible 13 #1 Radio & Records airplay hits he's enjoyed over the years, "The Closer I Get To You" and "Walk On By" (from 1994's *Reflections*), have become enduring staples of the format. White's recent rediscovery of the original demos from that hit project sparked a rekindling of the retro flame that inspired him to once again start *Playin' Favorites* on his latest disc for Sony Legacy.

In the spirit of those two tracks and "Who's That Lady?," another of the #1 hits from his 2001 release *Glow*, White mines the deeper romantic and soulful vibes of songs from the past 40 years that millions know from the playing of their first notes. These include hits composed or popularized by Burt Bachrach ("The Look of Love"), Dionne Warwick ("Déjà vu"), Van Morrison ("Crazy Love"), Bill Withers ("Lovely Day"), Bobby Hebb ("Sunny"), The Isley Brothers ("For The Love Of You"), Ray Charles (a finger snapping version of "Hit The Road Jack"), The Stylistics ("You Are Everything") and Hall & Oates ("One On One"). *Playin' Favorites* also includes performances from fellow smooth jazz greats Boney James ("Déjà vu"), White's recent "Jazz Attack" tourmates Richard Elliot, Rick Braun and Jonathan Butler, and R&B legend Jeffrey Osborne ("You Are Everything").

Across the U.S this summer, fans attending the latest "Guitars & Saxes" all-star shows are enjoying a medley of Grover Washington, Jr.'s "Mister Magic" and *Playin' Favorites*' first single, a brassy, sensual lite-funk twist on Jr. Walker's "What Does It Take (To Win Your Love)." On the recording, White plays the song's familiar melody on his acoustic guitar in a call and response style with saxman Sam Riney (who last played with White on *Reflections*). Veteran producer (and longtime White collaborator) Paul Brown's arrangement of "Mister Magic" includes a crunchy, modern hip-hop groove, sizzling horns, the flute of Dave Camp (an old cohort of White's from the Al Stewart band) and a special, retro-cool performance by legendary keyboardist Bob James on Fender Rhodes.

White says, "I had the idea to do another collection of these kinds of songs after going through some old tapes and finding these demos along with a dozen or so songs that never made it to that CD. I had honestly forgotten that there were any outtakes from those days. 'For The Love Of You' was one of those unused songs that sounded good to me, so I wondered if just maybe there was a whole other album waiting to be made, that could be a follow up to *Reflections*. Now just as then, the hard part is to keep the flavor of the original songs while fitting it into my style and making it mine. I want my versions to be able to stand on their own."

"Once I sit down at the keyboard to work on this," he adds, "coming up with the arrangement is a very natural, instinctive process. On 'For The Love Of You', for instance, I wanted to funk up the beat, make the ballad very danceable. Funny thing is, I did the opposite on my version of 'Who's That Lady?', substituting their frantic all-out rock and roll blitzkrieg for a much gentler approach. This idea—to take a well known song and do it in a different way—permeates the music on *Playin' Favorites*."

Just as White started putting together tracks based on the old arrangements on tape, it was time to hit the road for one of Summer 2005's biggest smooth jazz tours, "Jazz Attack," with old friends Rick Braun, Jonathan Butler and Richard Elliot. Not missing a beat, the guitarist packed his laptop and a mic and continued working on tracks in his spare time. He quickly took advantage of this great opportunity to include his tourmates on his latest work in progress. "I ambushed Richard backstage at the Carefree Theatre in West Palm Beach, Florida and had him play a verse of 'You Are Everything' on my improvised laptop studio," White says. "He had never played the song before and I tried to reassure him by saying that it was just an experiment, to see what the sax would sound like on this song. I loved his tender, introspective approach. I kept his second run through for the final mix."

Backstage at the North fork Theatre in Westbury, Long Island, he caught Braun with a flugelhorn in his hand and invited his horn playing friend into his makeshift dressing room studio to play on 'One on One.'



White was so moved by Braun's impromptu performance that he kept it for the second verse of the song; they finished the rest of the solo a few days later in Milwaukee. Butler later got in on the act, adding his inimitable vocal excitement to the chorus section of "Lovely Day."

"After the tour ended, I called Paul Brown to help me finish the album," White says, "and he came forward with a lot of great suggestions for other songs. He also took some of my rough arrangements and made them sparkle with new beats, cool sounds and musical guests I was very excited to have on board. I love the freshness he brought to *Playin' Favorites*, which echoes the wonderful work he did on *Reflections* twelve years ago."

Peter White may have tried to keep things Confidential by choosing a sly and sensuous title for his last album on Sony in 2004, but the secret didn't stay safe for long. Like its predecessor, 2001's *Glow*, the guitarist's album hit #2 on *Billboard's* Contemporary Jazz Chart, and its two singles "Talkin' Bout Love" and "How Does It Feel" kept his incredible streak of #1's alive. This string began in 1993 with "Promenade," the title track from his third disc that has become his early signature hit. He launched his solo career with *reveilleez-vous* (1990) and *Excusez-Moi* (1992) and cemented his status as one of smooth jazz's most exciting and essential artists and popular live performers with *Caravan of Dreams* (1996) and *Perfect Moment* (1998).

But pop music fans were listening to White's classic acoustic guitar style even before the advent of the New Adult Contemporary and Smooth Jazz formats, most notably via his collaborations with British folk/pop singer Al Stewart. The Stewart-White partnership, which culminated with the dual live recording *Rhymes in Rooms* in the mid-90s, spanned over 20 years. White played on Stewart's landmark Year of the Cat album, co-wrote and performed on two of Stewart's biggest hits, "Time Passages" and "Midnight Rocks," and served as the Scottish singer's bandleader while playing guitar, Hammond Organ and piano. He later co-produced Stewart's *Famous Last Words* album.

White's other major longtime association was with Basia, an early vocal star in the genre that later became known as smooth jazz. In 1984, brother Danny White and a then unknown Basia formed the band Matt Bianco; Peter performed on the group's album *Who's Side Are You On* as well as on the hit single "Half a Minute." When Basia and Danny left Matt Bianco to focus on her solo career, Peter White's guitar and accordion became an integral flavor in her popular sound. He played on her three bestselling albums *Time and Tide*, *London Warsaw New York* and *The Sweetest Illusion*, and appeared on her live performance release *Basia on Broadway*. Basia sang on "Just Another Day," which became a popular airplay hit from *Caravan of Dreams*. White in turn performed on the 2005 Matt Bianco comeback release *Matt's Mood*. It was during a time crunch period just before going on the singer's *The Sweetest Illusion* tour in 1994 that White decided to try his hand at a batch of songs he loved—a concept which evolved into *Reflections*.

Over the years, White has progressed from a shy onstage presence to a very confident performer who has an amazingly comfortable rapport with his audience. His showmanship was inspired in part by that of Dave Koz and Grover Washington, Jr., with whom he shared a bill at the 1991 Catalina Island Jazz Trax Festival; Washington later performed on White's song "Midnight In Manhattan". "I think I've just always enjoyed being part of an event or show where the audience is part of the show and is invited to participate with the performers," he says of his unique rapport with his fans. "In Britain at Christmastime they have pantomime shows where the audience plays along with the performers of legendary fairy tales, and it's great fun.

"That's the kind of spirit I've always enjoyed in my own shows," he adds. "I love to see everyone out there singing and dancing along and getting excited about the music I'm making and the stories I tell them. It's a lot more fun than just playing as if it were a recital. It's such a thrill after the show when I get to meet the fans and hear their stories as well. That's part of the joy of being a musician as well."

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