

Area resident puts heart and soul into life's musical career

By SANDY LOPEZ View Staff Writer

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On a relatively quiet street in North Las Vegas where many of the houses look the same, one house holds hidden treasures. In the living room, there are several platinum and gold records hung on a wall. Larry White sits beneath them in a crisp black button-down shirt and black pants.

"I've toured all over the world," White said. "There's so much that I've seen. At an early age, I learned more than average guitar players."

White, an R&B producer and guitar and bass player, experienced worldwide fame when he became the lead guitarist for The Whispers, an R&B and dance vocal group formed in the early '60s.

White was born and raised in San Francisco. His passion for music started at 7, when he first saw his mother's friend play the baritone sax.

His musical appetite grew when The Beatles came to play at Candlestick Park in 1966, and White heard a sound that he'd never heard before.

"All of the sudden, I heard all of these girls screaming," White said. "I asked my dad, 'What is that sound? Is somebody getting beat up?' He said 'No, that's them girls screaming for The Beatles.' From that point on, I knew I wanted to be a musician."

He formed his first band, Grand Theft, when he was in 10th grade.

At 16, White started touring with his band around the city to play at proms, private events and parties. The band was eventually signed to Honey Records, under Harvey Fuqua.

White credits Fuqua for teaching him how to write and compose songs.

Under Fuqua's direction, the band created its first hit record, "How Could You Be So Cold."

Raymond Bell, former manager of Grand Theft, said he knew White would make it big since the moment they started working together.

"His accomplishments don't surprise me," Bell said. "I knew he had natural talent and leadership qualities. He's one of the best in the business. That's what I expected him to do."

Grand Theft performed from 1973 to 1977.

A year later, when White was in his early 20s, he had the opportunity to audition as lead guitarist for The Whispers.

"At least 30 guitar players auditioned for them," White said. "I learned every song they ever made, but when I heard the other guitar players playing, my heart started racing. I started getting nervous."

After auditioning for two days, White was given the position.

"I was so happy, I called my mom," White said. "It was a big joy. Tears were falling out of my eyes."

After practicing for two weeks with the band, White took off running.

As the lead guitarist, White toured several sold-out shows around the world. Together, they formed musical hits, such as, “And the Beat Goes On,” “Rock Steady” and “It Just Gets Better With Time.”

The Whispers received multiple gold and platinum records.

During the 12 years White spent with The Whispers, he formed a side group called Collage, with hits such as “Get In Touch with Me” and “Romeo Where’s Juliet.”

He said musicians such as Jimi Hendrix, George Benson, Tower of Power, Lenny Williams, Bobby Brown and Quincy Jones have inspired him to push beyond his limits.

His musical career doesn’t end there. In the early ’80s, White wrote the hit song “Girl Friend” meant for the group New Edition. The heads of MCA Records decided the song would be better suited for Bobby Brown, who was about to embark on a solo career.

A bond formed between the duo, which led to musical collaborations and resulted in White helping Brown produce albums and songs. He also became the musical director for Brown’s “N E Heartbreak” tour.

Throughout his career, White has worked with Whitney Houston, Randy Jackson, Verdine White and Baby Face, among others.

In 1998, he moved to Las Vegas to become the musical director for the group Next Movement.

Although White said he feels as though his musical career has made a complete circle, he continues to perform with his five-piece band, In-A-Fect, which he formed seven years ago and performs pop, rock, R&B classics, hip-hop and old school funk.

In addition, White still plays with The Whispers when they are in town.

“Larry had the determination, talent and persistence to succeed,” Bell said. “He wasn’t comfortable just being good. He worked hard to become great.”

When asked about his secret to success, he answers with full confidence.

“Be sincere about the music,” White said. “Play for the people and follow your dreams. You can become whatever you want.”

In-A-Fect is scheduled to perform at 9 p.m. May 1, 2 and 3 at Orleans Casino, 4500 W. Tropicana Avenue.

For more information, visit inafect.com.

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