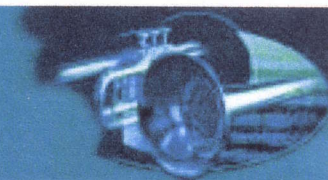


STUDIO/COMMERCIAL SCENE

ERIC BOLVIN, COLUMN EDITOR



Studio/Commercial Scene seeks to present information on issues related to the trumpet's role in the music industry in today's ever-changing environment. Ideas and suggestions should be directed to: Eric Bolvin, 816 Blossom Hill Road #4, San Jose, CA 95123 USA; studio@trumpetguild.org

THE RECORDING OF *WHAT IS HIP?*

BY GREG ADAMS WITH ERIC BOLVIN

"What Is Hip?" is one of the most exciting R&B tunes ever written. In this article, trumpet player and horn arranging legend Greg Adams discusses the recording of this staple of the R&B repertoire.

1973

What Is Hip? was originally recorded in 1973 and was released in 1974 on the *Tower Of Power* album. In those days, we would assemble the songs for recording at our rehearsal studio and play them live for months before recording them. That way we could kind of test market them on the audience. This is one of the most exciting songs in the band's repertoire to this day and has pretty much stayed in its original form.

The basics of the song were written before the song was arranged. I tailored the performance of the band's instrumentation. And in this case, the arrangement really built the body and depth of this composition. So I was involved in the creative process from the beginning.

The song was recorded at Wally Heider's in San Francisco, which was a top studio back then. We would "lock out" the studio for weeks at a time so we could work at our own pace. We recorded the rhythm section first and then would overdub the horns. I arranged the tune for an eight or nine piece section, which was then doubled. Keyboardist Chester Thompson joined the band right in the middle of recording *Tower Of Power*; and for me, the addition of Chester was very exciting and changed the band's sound forever.

The effects that I used on my trumpet solos were cutting edge at the time, but would be considered archaic today. It was kind of funny because we tried everything and so many of the effects were awful. But I think what we ended up using was something called a Phase Shifter.

1981

In 1981, we re-recorded the song for Sheffield Labs, an audiophile record company. The title of that album was *Tower*

Of Power Direct. The recording technique used for that recording was one that required the band to play live in the same room with little or no isolation between the players. Another interesting catch to the session was that we had to play the entire side of the record because it was being recorded "direct to disc" on vinyl. That meant no stopping. We had just two or three seconds between the songs. We were to record six songs, three on each side. Sounded easy enough because the songs were songs we had been playing for years. While it was easy for us to play three songs in a row, we didn't realize how the technical difficulties would play into the process. We would be into the third and final song of a side and the booth would stop us and say there was a problem of some sort and we'd have to start over. It got a little tense a few times, but we

eventually got it after several eight to ten hour days. Talk about a chop buster!

The 1981 direct to disc session was recorded live, no overdubs. We added Rick Waychesko on third trumpet to fatten the voicing on the horn section and also used backing vocalists and a percussionist.

A Little History

When I was in high school, I was writing and arranging for the jazz band. It was a luxury to have that many voices to experiment with. Although I have been influenced by some of my favorite arrangers, (Nelson Riddle, Henry Mancini, and Quincy Jones), I am pretty much self-taught. I was taught theory and harmony at Salvation Army band camps in the summers during my youth and was very fortunate to have such a good school band to hone my writing chops on. I joined Tower of Power right out of high school and relished the challenge of going from a big band to a five-piece horn section. Of course, in the studio I had the luxury of fleshing out my arrangements with triple tracking.

But the real trick was to make sure I could scale it down to five horns for the live shows. It always worked out. I just had to find the five most important notes of the chords. Also, the

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syncopation that I would employ in my writing would sometimes cast the horn section as a percussion section as well.

Final thoughts

When I wrote this arrangement, I never dreamed what impact it would have in music, even today. This arrangement and others are part of my legacy with the band and I'm very proud of it.

The original chart for the 1974 recording was lost but I recreated it for the Sheffield Labs record so the producer would have a score to follow in the booth. I was nominated for a GRAMMY for this version in 1981 for Best Arrangement Accompanying a Vocal. A collectable version of the score is available on my web site.*

I have been very fortunate to have arranged and played with some of pop music's biggest stars and contributed to some of the most important recordings in pop culture. To be asked by so many to contribute my sound to theirs is the highest form of flattery.

*This GRAMMY-nominated arrangement, handcrafted in Greg's own hand, is a replication of the original, in pencil. This offering is a limited edition of ten. Each score will be numbered and personally autographed by Greg and will come with a Certificate of Authenticity.

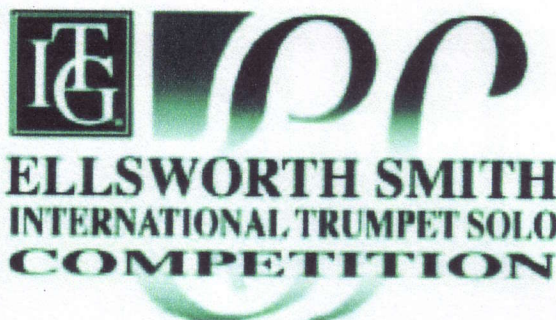
About the author: Greg Adams's career has included success as an arranger, composer, conductor, and performer and earned him both Grammy and Emmy nominations and an International Broadcasting Award from The Hollywood Radio and Television Society. His 1995 solo debut, *Hidden Agenda*, went all the way to #1 for five weeks at the top of the Smooth Jazz charts, fueled by Adams' sublime muted trumpet and a smoldering remake of Sade's *Smooth Operator*. The album received wide critical acclaim and established him as a major architect of the emerging "smooth jazz" sound. The 2002 follow-up album, *Midnight Morning*, generated two top ten singles, *Roadhouse* and *Sup with That*. Adams' third solo project *FireFly*, released in 2004, was among the top 100 honored at NAC radio in 2005.

Legendary for the horn arrangements that created the signature sound and have made Tower of Power one of the most enduring musical entities today, Adams is a founding member of Tower of Power, recording fourteen albums with the group on four major labels and millions in record sales. Greg has arranged for, and performed and recorded with countless artists as diverse as his career, including The Eurythmics, Rod Stewart, Elton John, Lyle Lovett, Phish, Linda Ronstadt, Luther Vandross, Little Feat, Aaron Neville, Santana, Everclear, Quincy Jones, Huey Lewis and the News, Wilson Pickett, Heart, Josh Groban, Bonnie Raitt, Dionne Warwick, Madonna, and The Rolling Stones.

For more on Greg Adams, please visit his web site (<http://www.gregadamsmusic.com>).

Equipment: Greg Adams plays the Monette AJNA II B-flat trumpet, Bel Canto B-flat trumpet, and the Kanstul copper bell flugelhorn.

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