

Carlton, Ford bring versatility to show

BY RON WYNN

rwynn@washpost.com

CONCERT PREVIEW

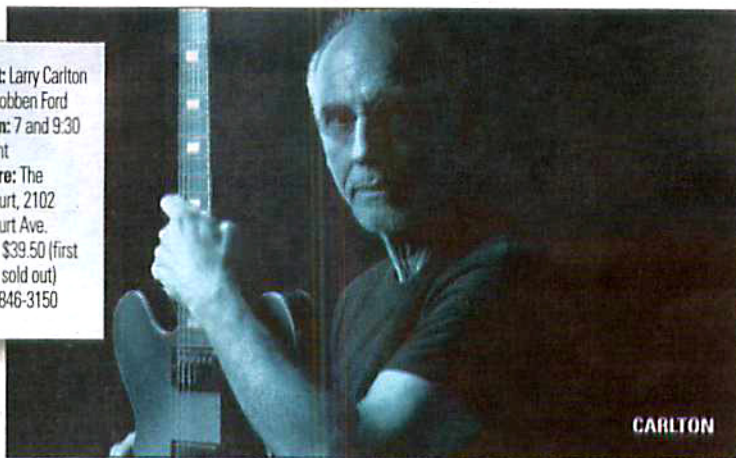
He's been a familiar figure on the jazz and pop scene since the 1970s, yet Larry Carlton may have appeared on more rock dates as a session musician. But he's found time to be a member of the successful smooth jazz quartet Fourplay and to make several acclaimed recordings with various peers, including his latest date with esteemed jazz/blues giant Robben Ford *Live in Tokyo*,

"I really enjoy doing many different things musically and working in several different styles," Carlton said. "In terms of my first influence it was jazz, and I still certainly like the type of playing in a traditional jazz guitar vein that would be considered mainstream. But doing smooth jazz, rock, blues or session work has also been very rewarding, so it's more for me if it's a type of music I enjoy rather than any specific category."

Carlton will join Ford in concert tonight at the Belcourt for two shows, playing material from their current release, which Carlton says was among his favorite projects, though it took awhile to get together to make .

"Robben and I had been talking for a long time about making a record together, but for whatever reason it seemed like our schedules didn't work out," Carlton said. "But for this CD he brought in some songs, I had some songs, and we worked things out and

What: Larry Carlton and Robben Ford
When: 7 and 9:30 tonight
Where: The Belcourt, 2102 Belcourt Ave.
Cost: \$39.50 (first show sold out)
Info: 846-3150



came up with a series of pieces that I think really work together. It was one of the easiest and most enjoyable things that I've done mainly because, in addition to being such a great player, he's very versatile and able to do anything on guitar. It's very easy to work with someone that supportive and capable."

Carlton could use those same words to describe his own work, which has been celebrated since his days as a prolific studio musician in Los Angeles.

For many years it was nothing for Carlton to appear on up to 500 recordings a year. Steely Dan, Joni Mitchell, Billy Joel and Quincy Jones were among the people who regularly requested Carlton's services, and he arranged and performed on albums by Barbra Streisand and Charly Garcia.

However Carlton began making his name as a soloist during the five years he played with the Crusaders.

"I remember being an inexperienced kid in my early 20s playing one night at a session for Donovan and Joe Sample was sitting there on the piano," Carlton said. "The next day I got a phone call and was asked to join the Crusaders. That was an incredible experience, one that you never forget."

He played with the group from 1971-1976, then went solo in 1977 and has since won multiple Grammy awards and done numerous projects. Perhaps his most famous solo is the slicing, technically impressive lines he contributed to Steely Dan's "Kid Charlemagne" on the band's 1976 album *The Royal Scam*.

For the past 10 years he's been part of Fourplay along with keyboardist Bob James, bassist Nathan East and drummer Harvey Mason.

"Being in Fourplay is really a dream gig," Carlton said. "Every couple of years we get together and make a recording, then we do some dates and tour a while. After that, everyone returns to doing their own thing. Yet whenever we get together, it's as if we never left. There are no egos, no concerns about billing or who is the leader, just four guys who enjoy playing with each other and enjoy making good music."

A 12-year resident of Franklin, who moved to the area for family rather than musical reasons, Carlton's produced a number of albums for his wife, Contemporary Christian music artist Michele Pillar. He's also the uncle of singer/songwriter Vanessa Carlton.

"I've been very fortunate throughout my career," Carlton said. "Recording and playing dates with someone like Robben is just another of many wonderful things I've enjoyed, as well as being in Fourplay." **CP**