

# Davis showers gospel on Q-C

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Correspondent

A tornado warning and a severe thunder storm didn't stop the release of Byron Davis' last cassette.

It was during the springtime of 1993, yet despite the stormy weather several people showed up for his "Sings" tape release party at the Funny Bone Comedy Club (Davis entertained during the dining hour for the nightclub's first two years.)

Davis is ready to begin working on his fourth release and debut CD. The Quad City keyboardist, singer and songwriter is returning back to his gospel toots for the next project.

"Being a son of a preacher," he said, "I grew up playing in the church. I have always kept my thumb on the pulse of gospel. It's very much part of me and my music."

Davis has always produced and released his own material. For the next release Ralph Lofton out of Nashville is going to produce it. Lofton is a keyboard player on BET's "Bobby Jones Gospel" and a Grammy award nominated pro-



## Byron Davis

ducer that has performed with Whitney Houston, Stevie Wonder and Barbara Mandrell. New Sound Gospel has expressed an interest to distribute the disc.

"I'm going to Nashville this month to start recording it" Davis stated. "We should have the CD out by the beginning of 1995."

His previous works include "Sweet Rain" (jazzy piano compositions), "Can't Stop" (gospel), and "Sings" (standard jazz classics.)

With a voice and talent that rivals the likes of Jeffrey Osborne and Luther Vandross, it quickly becomes clear that Davis is a consummate artist. His rich musical heritage began at the age of seven when he performed with a church choir. By the age of nine he was playing the piano and writing his own songs.

Davis's four children are continuing the musical tradition. "My children are playing the piano and writing their own material," he said proudly. "It's nice to see it happen all over again."

His career in music spans nearly two decades and has had several highlights including studio work with McFadden & Whitehead, Yellow Jackets, Charles May, Bobby Lyle and Little Richard.

His work with Little Richard ended up on the big screen. "I co-wrote two songs with Little Richard," he said. "One of those songs was used in the movie 'Down and Out in Beverly Hills'"

He also toured with Frankie Avalon Jr. and spent two years on the road with Johnny Taylor. We even went to Japan. Johnny at the time had the hit single "Disco Lady" he said.

Working with Taylor had other advantages. "I was playing Memphis at the blues festival with Johnny Taylor, and B.B. King's keyboardist got sick," Davis recalls. "On the spur of the moment B.B. King asked me if I would play with him."

Next weekend at Sicily Sa, the Byron Davis Band will consist of Davis, on vocals and keyboards, Matt Craighead on sax, Ray Freeman on guitar (he also plays in Jazz Express), Troy Rangel on bass and Joel Dick on drums.

Davis has also penned some local jingles including "Palmer Proud" the theme song for the college of chiropractics.

"I'm going to continue to do it all," he said. "The gospel work, playing jazz music and doing the commercial writing."