

jasonmiles

what's going on?

SONGS OF **MARVIN GAYE**

MILES TO MILES gave acclaimed musician/producer Jason Miles the opportunity to revisit his collaboration with the legendary Miles Davis. Widely praised by critics and fans, MILES TO MILES was inspired by the trumpeter, but — like other albums by Jason Miles that have paid tribute to artists he holds in the highest regard, including Weather Report, Grover Washington, and the Brazilian songwriter Ivan Lins — not an imitation of the original.

Similarly on his latest undertaking WHAT'S GOING ON?, Jason Miles takes as his palette the music of another of his heroes, Marvin Gaye. Eleven songs originally tracked by Gaye, including the classic title tunes, *Sexual Healing* and *Heard It Through The Grapevine* are balanced with some lesser known songs that Jason feels help to give a rounded impression of the multi-faceted singer/songwriter.

Why Marvin Gaye? "I wrote a lot of material for MILES TO MILES," says Jason, "and I wanted to take a break. Things come to me in waves. Last summer my wife Kathy and I were having dinner at a restaurant in Martha's Vineyard and a CD of Marvin's songs was being played. I had to excuse myself and go outside for a minute to collect my thoughts. I realized then that I had to make an album of Marvin's songs.

"It's funny. I can remember asking three of my favorite musicians — Miles Davis, Herbie Mann, and Gato Barbieri — on three separate occasions, who their favorite artists were. All of them put Marvin Gaye at, or near the top, of their list. That stuck with me. And, from a business point of view, I've also been looking for a way to create a new sound out of established songs. I felt that Marvin Gaye would fit well into this structure, so I listened to about 90 of his songs, picked 11 of them to record, and began to put together a list of musicians who I wanted to work with on this project."

Jason Miles' ability to match talent to track has long been recognized as one of his strengths as a producer. His musicality has attracted a roster of top flight talents to many of his projects. WHAT'S GOING ON? contributors include Marcus Miller, Herb Alpert, Jay Beckenstien, Cyro Baptista, and a number of up-and-coming artists who are primed for wider exposure.

Marvin Gaye's initial success came at a time when pop music was compressed into releases that generally were contained into packages of three minutes or less. What happens to these gems when they are expanded in length? "I wanted to deconstruct these tunes and arrange them in a way that allowed the extraordinary talent we used to open up. *Heavy Love Affair*, for example, is over five minutes. Why wouldn't I want to turn Marcus Miller loose? We're creating a vibe here that is not meant to be a copy of the original. The fact that we take these great songs into another space is part of what draws the listener into the experience."

An effective producer knows when to pick up the director's megaphone and give instructions, and when to get out of the way. Working with talent spread out across a wide geographical range also impacts the process but is also made possible by technology and the internet. "Some musicians need more direct, face-to-face input than others. But if I can't trust Herb Alpert and Marcus Miller, for example, to play the right stuff, well...that would rest with me. Marcus did his thing and then put his session up on his internet public folder, and I pulled off his parts. Herbie sent me CDs of his tracks. We also tracked some stuff here at my upstate New York studio. Doug Oberkircher, who's engineered for me for some time, mixed these tracks here as well."

As powerful a draw as the music of Marvin Gaye had on him, the politics of the moment also figured into Jason Miles' decision to devote a large chunk of time to this material. "I'm very upset about current international politics, and our dismissive view on the environment. It's the same stuff Marvin was preaching about 25 years ago. It doesn't seem like we've learned a damn thing.

"We're all here together, but it seems like we're being pulled in different directions, and for what? We should be listening to the message that Marvin put out about love and brotherhood. On a personal level, this project was one way for me to celebrate my 25th wedding anniversary, and tell Kathy how much I love her."