

Kenny Gamble on the Philly Sound

By Robyn L. Baylor
Tribune Correspondent

Everyone knows Kenny Gamble. How can the *Tribune* celebrate Black History Month without talking to the one who started it all? The legendary producer who has worked with everybody who is anybody in the music business took time out of his airtight schedule to talk about music, music and more music. He's very honest, fair, open-minded and considerate of all the diverse music that travels over the airwaves. Here is what was said.

Tribune: What happened to the older R&B and Philly sound artists of the '70s?

Kenny Gamble: Many of the Philly sound artists are doing well . . . Patti LaBelle's career is fantastic. She's now on MCA Records, and she's still doing well. The O'Jays (recently honored by the International Association of African-American Music) are now on EMI/Capitol and they are sustaining their career. Teddy Pendergrass, even after his accident, he's still doing well. He now has a No. 1 record with Electra Records. Lou Rawls is now with Blue Note, so he's pretty much sustained his career. I still watch them perform, and they're all still doing good.

Unfortunately, some of the artists have broken up, like The Jones Girls, and The Three Degrees, because they got married and had children.

We've worked with a number of artists over the years, and eventually they wanted to write and produce for themselves, and went into other companies which was O.K. and we wished them luck . . .

We're now recording with The Dells. We recently signed them, and it's our first time working with them. Phyllis Hyman also has a new album out due June 25.

and it will be her first release in five years.

Trib.: There was a time when you turned on the radio, every artist you heard was from Philadelphia. Will it ever be that way again?

K.G.: It's happening right now! There are good artists right now who are from Philadelphia, like Boys II Men — they're doing good. D.J. Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince are fantastic. Grover Washington Jr. is a legend. Everything has peaks and valleys. We all need new people to take the stage.

The music of today is very in-
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Panelists, registrants, artists, musicians and record company executives gathered at the Franklin Plaza last week to celebrate Black Music Month with a series of seminars, including this one that included a conversation with jazz performer/producer Bobbi Humphrey.

Panel studies effects of risque lyrics in Black music

By Sherry Stone
Tribune staff

What impact do the lyrics of artists like 2 Live Crew, Color Me Bad, and other risque groups have on your children? These and other topics were discussed at the International African-American Music (IAAM) Celebration last weekend.

The impact of positive and negative lyrics was only one topic addressed in a panel discussion in honor of Black Music Month at the Wyndham Franklin Plaza last Saturday, from 10 A.M. until noon. Several other subjects were also discussed at the IAAAM forum entitled "African-American Music: Past, Present and Future, A Historical Perspective from Slavery to 1991."

Other topics included the influence of African rhythm in African-American music; the impact of African-American music on American music patterns, and the

effects of the African-American experience in the United States on music styles and lyrics.

The panel of artists included Harrison Ridley of Jazz 90 (WRTI FM), Abiodun Oyewole of "The Last Poets," Jimmy Castor, Khephra Burns, a free-lance writer, Barbara Mason, a songwriter and vocal artist, Helen Scott-Leggins, formerly of the "Three Degrees," and James Jones of USA Today.

"Music is beautiful, and the words have to match the music," said Oyewole. "Lyrics, words can put negative vibrations in the air."

As an example of songs with negative lyrics, he cited, "Sex You Up," by Color Me Bad, and songs with lines that are derogatory to women.

The panelists also talked about the power of rhythm in African-American music and the fact that it can be used to get messages, either positive or negative, across to

young people.

"Record companies are producing songs with lyrics that are destroying our children," said Scott-Leggins, whose group, formerly called "The Three Degrees," was the only African-American group to perform at the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana in Britain.

"When they hear that beat, you can tell them anything."

Burns, another panelist, put down the materialist mentality of American youths and the perpetuation of that mentality through

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