

Betty Wright

The Clean-up Woman Goes From Pain to Gain

By Bob Long

Legendary but still youthful, vocalist *Betty Wright* has been making records and playing live since 1971, when she scored her first hit as a 17-year-old with the 4 million-seller "Clean Up Woman." Working constantly both in and out of the spotlight since that early success, Wright achieved an unprecedented personal triumph in 1988 with the gold album *Mother Wit*, which she released on her own label, Ms. B Records, after virtually every major passed on the master tapes. The LP, distributed by Steve Alaimo's Miami-based Vision Records, produced a pair of top ten R&B singles, "No Pain, No Gain" and "After the Pain."

Mother Wit is significant in other ways as well: The album marks Wright's return to the Miami sound she helped create, and it contains the most personal and heartfelt songs she has ever written or recorded. These songs have become even more a part of her over the course of the year, 11 months of which she has spent on the concert trail.

"I believe in writing songs dealing with stories of real-life situations," Wright explains, "stories that people can not only dance to but also relate to their own lives—as well as letting people know more about Betty Wright. But since there is only so much you can learn from a three- or four-minute song, I enjoy performing live—it allows the audience to get a more in-depth understanding of me. Live shows allow me to show-out, talk and just be myself. I attribute my ability to tour so much to God and to a very supportive, loving and understanding husband and family.

Wright is currently working on a pair of family projects: an album of R&B and reggae with her husband, writer/producer/artist Noel Williams, and a single with her 11-year-old daughter Aisha. (Both are slated for an early '89 release on Ms. B. Records) The energetic artist/writer/producer/exec has also found the time to produce several new acts for her label—vocalist Carl Ramsey, 18-year-old singer/songwriter Myshjua, the self-contained group Work for Higher, rapper Smoove Matty Matt and her sister Jeanette. On top of all that, Wright is putting the finishing touches on her forthcoming solo album, *4 U 2 N. Joy*, which contains the recently released single "From Pain to Joy,"

a powerful soul ballad with obvious thematic ties to its two predecessors.

Wright believes the return to popularity of her musical approach—the same uncompromised, distinctively black sound she's purveyed for 23 years—has been sorely missed by consumers, as evidenced by the explosive success of the similarly soulful Cheryl Pepsii Riley single, "Thanks for My Child."

"This business goes in cycles," she says. "Not too long ago, my type of music was labeled 'too

black.' The consumer has certainly made a profound statement by exercising their purchasing power to let us in the music business know what type of music they want to hear and buy. Regardless of who you are and your station in life, there is a need for help and/or advice. I feel that my music lets people know that even if you mess up, there is life after the pain.

I would like to thank God, my family, friends, radio, retailers and fans around the world for their continual support."

Wright has written and recorded a new seasonal song, "A Christmas to Remember," on which she's joined by her five-year-old daughter Patrice. The song's message is very clear—it's about the joy one gets from helping others. Putting her commitment where her mouth is, Wright reveals that she intends to provide Christmas dinner for over 200 homeless people. "It may be a small number," she says, "but imagine if every family who could would feed at least one person—think how many people would eat. I don't like the overwhelming commerciality of Christmas, because many families and children feel so much pressure to be a part of giving and receiving gifts, until many fall into crimes of stealing. Instead of buying four or five toys for your kids, take some of that money and buy food for people who have nothing—and not just at Christmas time. We all should share in helping our fellow human beings who are less fortunate."

Dedication, determination, faith, mother wit and a deep commitment to herself and others have taken the clean-up woman a long way in the last two decades. And she's done a great deal more than just sing about it. For Betty Wright, pain and gain are the essential elements of art and life.



Quiet Riot

L.A. Metal Band Starts in the Middle

By Janiss Garza

Let's start at the beginning. Which actually means starting at the end, because the Quiet Riot of the early-to-mid-'80s is quite different from the Quiet Riot that exists now. You see, the story of the new-and-improved Quiet Riot begins where the old one leaves off. But that doesn't mean there isn't some of the old Quiet Riot left. Confused? Perhaps we'd be best off starting in the middle.

Every metal fan worth his breeches knows about Quiet Riot's earlier success—the three multiplatinum LPs, the hit single "Cum Feel the Noize." And everyone knows that their fall from grace was at least partly due to the big mouth of ex-vocalist Kevin DuBrow. Guitarist Carlos Cavazo remembers those days well. "A lot of things that were written about the band were what *Kevin* said and what *Kevin* did and who *Kevin* chopped *this* week," he grumbles. After all the bad press and ego problems, it was not only logical, it was *necessary* to get rid of DuBrow. Now Cavazo and drummer Frankie Banali have a new singer, Paul Shortino (formerly of Rough Cutt), a new bassist, Sean McNabb, a new Spencer Proffer-

and it clicked? That's how we feel."

Of course, Quiet Riot is much more than just a one-night stand for this foursome and their label, Pasha, which has stuck by QR through thick and thin. They did, however, pick up bassist McNabb from the Cathouse, an L.A. metal club known for its libidinous atmosphere. The Indiana native had made his way to L.A. to check out the scene and search out the QR guys. "For some reason, in the back of my mind I knew that Rudy [Sarzo] was not going to stay in the band," McNabb insists.

"Yeah," counters Banali, "the fact that Whitesnake [Sarzo's other band] was doing great did nothing to color his decision."

McNabb met Banali at the popular club last year and the bassist found himself auditioning for the band—at 11 the next morning. "It felt like a family right off," Sean recalls. "I joined that afternoon."

Two weeks later, the guys performed their first gig—a benefit in Japan. From Shortino's description, it sounds like an inauspicious debut. "We were writing all these songs, and all of a sudden I had to go into the Quiet



QUIET RIOT: Banali, McNabb, Shortino, Cavazo

produced album, *Quiet Riot*, and a new attitude. The new LP's smoky sound is less brazen than before, but still ballsy and powerful.

Since they're essentially making a fresh start, you have to wonder why the L.A.-based group has chosen to hold on to a name with so many patently negative connotations. "Because it's too late to change it!" the guys laugh.

"We worked so hard to build the name," Cavazo explains more seriously. "The people that helped make it a household word were Frankie Banali, Kevin DuBrow, Rudy Sarzo and myself; Chuck Wright to a lesser degree. Me and Frankie are still in the band and we feel it would be a waste to throw that all away and start over from scratch."

And how does the band explain the special chemistry that goes on within the present lineup? "It's magic," enthuses Shortino. "It was something that was meant to be."

Cavazo searches for an analogy: "Have you ever picked up on someone one night and you went home and the sex was just great

Riot catalog and go through *everything*. In fact, I wrote all the lyrics on big sheets of paper. They had 'em all taped to the floor—the stagehands were all Japanese, so they put everything out of order. I was singing, looking for my song, and I got this guy with a video camera running around." It couldn't have gone too badly, though. "Nobody asked where Kevin was," Cavazo snickers.

Things should be more organized when the band hits the road in a special guest slot early next year. "We're gonna start preproduction for the tour immediately after the New Year's hangovers leave us," says Shortino. And Paul won't need lyric sheets—after all, he helped write the songs on the new album, and only a few of the band's old hits will be part of the set. But, Banali asserts, "In the middle of next year, when the record's doing absolutely *unbelievable*, then we'll probably bring in some old songs." "Maybe some Supremes," Banali suggests.

And that, no doubt, marks the end...of the beginning.