

# MUSIC

## Clubs and Venues - CD Reviews

### Curtis C.T. Traylor and The C.T. Connection The Warehouse Restaurant, Marina Del Rey

By Kenneth Davis

"We're gonna have a funky good time!" shouted Curtis Traylor in a husky, James Brown growl. And audience members were indeed having a funky good time as they watched Traylor and his band, The CT Connection, power through a smokin' rendition of the James Brown oldie "Doin' It To Death." It felt as if Traylor was channeling "The Godfather of Soul," as he had the man's moves and mannerisms down pat, even the sliding feet and the famous knee drops. This was just one of several memorable moments to be found in singer Curtis Traylor's electrifying performance at The Warehouse Restaurant in Marina Del Rey.

This was my first visit to The Warehouse in about ten years. I used to come here quite a bit when I was younger for such occasions as birthdays and family get-togethers. And I must say that this place hasn't lost any of its charm. It still has the same cozy industrial/tropical motif: hanging plants, the barrel decorations, the rustic décor, and the heated out-



door seating that overlooks the California Yacht Club. Everything was exactly as I remembered it. It was Valentine's Day, and man was this place packed. It was just buzzing with activity. In fact, when I was leaving at about 10:00 p.m., there were dozens of people still

coming in, and this was on a weeknight. The Warehouse maintains a comfortable, laid back feel that many other big Southern California restaurants lack.

Now back to the performance. Before he appeared onstage, Curtis Traylor's band played for a good twenty minutes. Traylor sat in a chair beside the stage while his band played a flawless selection of jazz tunes. This is in the tradition of many soul legends (like James Brown) who like to build up audience excitement and anticipation by taking their time before coming onstage. When Traylor finally hit the

stage, he kicked off his set with a silky-smooth rendition of the Temptations classic "My Girl." In addition to several R&B standards, the set included a few original songs written by Traylor. The set was a pleasing selection of quiet storm R&B, a little jazz, and some

foot-stomping funk. And throughout the show, Traylor's vocals and stage presence were impeccable.

Traylor is an old-school performer in the truest sense of the word. Like the soul greats of old, Traylor puts everything into his performance: he was literally dripping with sweat by the second song. Moreover, he is in total command onstage and displays an excellent rapport with the audience. He sings with great conviction and passion. When asked how he selects which songs to perform onstage, he asserts, "I go by the mood of the audience." This approach prevents Traylor's performance from ever seeming stiff or overly calculated, giving it a natural and spontaneous feel. He cites Marvin Gaye, Luther Vandross, Jeffrey Osborne and the Winans as his key influences. His singing roots are grounded in gospel music, as he began singing in church at the age of eight. I asked him if there were any new artists out there that he liked, and he named gospel singers Yolanda Adams and Kirk Franklin, revealing that he's still connected to his gospel roots. While watching Traylor's rousing and impassioned performance, you can clearly see his many influences come to the foreground.

Traylor's band, The CT Connection, includes David Scott

on guitar, Allen Kamai on bass, Craig Chesnut on drums and Yuko Nomura on keyboards; Nomura also provides backing vocals on some of the songs. A consummate group of musicians, this hot-playing quartet provides stellar backup for Traylor.

Traylor and his band were definitely connecting with the audience. You could see people bouncing their heads and tapping their feet. About midway into the show, Traylor shifted into romantic mode and started talking to the audience about love. And the audience just ate it up. At one point he even walked off the stage and into the audience to serenade a lady. Throughout the show, he held the audience's attention and effortlessly shifted tones, showing that he is an artist to be reckoned with.

Traylor performs at The Warehouse about twice a month, and his next performance there will be on **March 23rd**. You can visit The Warehouse website at: [www.warehousemdr.com](http://www.warehousemdr.com) or call (310) 823-1142. To find out more about Curtis Traylor, call **Charles Laurence Productions** at: (818) 368-4962. Traylor is also scheduled to perform at **Prezzo Restaurant** in Sherman Oaks on **Feb. 23rd**. Prezzo Restaurant can be contacted at: (818) 905-8400.