

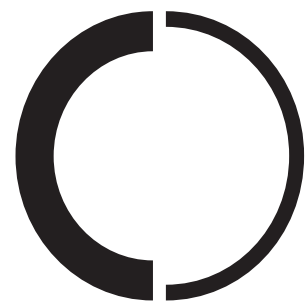
ONE THING, AFTER ANOTHER

STEPHEN HAWLEY MARTIN TRAVELS A PATH FROM ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE ONTO THE COSMIC HIGHWAY

BY THARON GIDDENS
PHOTOS BY MONICA ESCAMILLA



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ONE OF RICHMOND'S MOST PROLIFIC AUTHORS IS PASSIONATE ABOUT HIS WORK.

Stephen Hawley Martin, a former principal at the Martin Agency, the Richmond advertising firm that brought the Gator lizard to life and in an earlier iteration proclaimed that Virginia is for Lovers, is still a creative force.

His focus these days though is less on earthly matters, and more with an eye on the paranormal. Look at his author page on Amazon, and you'll find titles including "Your Guide to Achieve Fourth Density: The Law of One, RA, and the End of Suffering," "Reincarnation: Good News for Open-Minded Christians & Other Truth-Seekers" and "The Truth About Life and How to Make Yours the Best of All."

The meaning of life according to Martin? There is an entity, "spirit," at the center of everything, and we are each part of it, as is everything else. That entity wanted to know itself, and in seeking to achieve that goal it fragmented, and now it's in pieces. That includes everything, even us, and we are striving to return to the entity.

"At some point, spirit created an almost infinite number of bubbles, or whirlpools of itself, i.e., consciousness, and turned them loose so they could interact," Martin writes in "Facts About Life and Death."

From that concept, he expounds on reincarnation, soul mates, politics and political leaders, extraterrestrial beings, the Buddha and Christ, and how an awareness of the nature of the entity will cure gun violence and school shootings while in general bringing about a new age of enlightenment.

His other key tenet? No worries—you'll have infinite chances to get things right. That Judgment Day thing? Think of it as a learning assessment. "God is not going to come down and put

his finger in your face," Martin says. Now Martin is an acolyte of sorts, spreading the word about his take on how things are and what makes the universe work. It's a calling, a later-in-life drive to make people aware of what he perceives as the true state of things—the true state of everything. "I feel like I have a mission to wake people up," Martin says.

LEAP OF FAITH
By his own account, Martin had a typical post-World War II childhood in Richmond. The son of Hawley Philippe and Evelyn Martin, he was raised in a household that was not especially religious, one more oriented toward science and rationalism.

He earned a bachelor's in economics in the late 1960s at Hampden-Sydney College. Advertising was the family business; his father had worked with Ferguson Advertising, and his brother, the late David Martin, had co-founded an ad agency in Richmond—Martin & Woltz. Stephen Martin began his professional career in Baltimore in 1969 with VanDusen Douglas; then moved to Martin & Woltz in 1973 and ran that agency's office in Washington. He then worked with his brother at the founding of the Martin Agency in 1975. He served in several positions there at various times, including director of client services, senior vice president for plans, and senior vice president for direct marketing services.

He was president and chief executive officer for Althey Martin Webb in 1979-86. That agency became Hawley Martin Partners in 1984, with Stephen serving as a founding partner with his brother and working as chief executive officer for the firm until 1989, when it was bought out by the Interpublic Group of Companies. Richmond resident Jim Maxwell worked with the brothers and managed Hawley Martin Advertising Agency. He also co-wrote an Oaklea title with Stephen Martin, "The Martin Managing Method." Maxwell noted that the agency and the brothers built success in developing campaigns for national names, but would deliver the same top-tier work for clients in Richmond, too. "It was probably one of the highlights of my work as a professional," he says. "It's not everyday that you get work with giants."

Maxwell describes Stephen Martin as having a strong sense of self-actualization and as spiritual. "That's what drives him," he says. Maxwell says that David Martin also had a deep sense of spirituality about him. Stephen Martin says that he had "lots of deep discussions" on spirituality with his brother.

Advertising was a good life for Martin, and he focused on work, but then, he says, the mystical world intruded. Martin was 35, lying on a hammock in his backyard, when he experienced an all-or-none epiphany that the grass, the trees, the sky, his own being were all part of something greater. It was life-changing, he says, the start of his pursuit of alternative theories and knowledge, but it also was not something he was comfortable sharing with coworkers.

He says that there were two other experiences early in life that he thought nothing of at the time, but that, looking back, he believes were encounters with the extraordinary.

One happened when he was a teen and was struck by a car

Publicity photos of Steve and his brother David circa 1970 with a photo of the late Steve and his brother David, when Hawley was the former of a church in Arizona.

while strolling along U.S. Highway 1. He says he walked away without a scratch. "It was like a miracle. It had to be," he says. "Instead of under the car, I went over it. My shoes were 50 feet ahead of me...how is that possible?"

It wasn't until much later in life, he says, that it occurred to him that surviving that accident was miraculous—and maybe an early sign that he was here on earth for a purpose. "I didn't share that with anybody until I started writing these books," Martin says.

The second event occurred when he was in his mid-50s. He was feverish, he says, and he experienced the sensation of feeling that he was somewhere around the ceiling of his room and looking down on his physical body. He attributed it to partying, but he now thinks it was a near-death encounter of sorts (see excerpt on Page 77).

After his revelation in the hammock, Martin says, his outlook on life and world views altered. He had already been reading books about metaphysics and the brain's interaction with the spirit world, and he experienced the sensation of feeling that he was somewhere around the ceiling of his room and looking down on his physical body. He attributed it to partying, but he now thinks it was a near-death encounter of sorts (see excerpt on Page 77).

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from the University of Virginia and its Division of Perceptual Studies in the School of Medicine. The late Dr. Ian Stevenson initiated parapsychology studies there in the late 1950s and founded the Division of Perceptual Studies. His research

more than 1,000 incidents involving people who said they had near-death experiences. For Martin, the work of Greyson and other division researchers provides "convincing evidence" that consciousness can exist independent of the brain's interaction with the spirit world, and he experienced the sensation of feeling that he was somewhere around the ceiling of his room and looking down on his physical body. He attributed it to partying, but he now thinks it was a near-death encounter of sorts (see excerpt on Page 77).

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was talking about his Father in a way that's closer to the Hindu sense of God as both in the world and transcending it. Martin says he thinks a young Jesus may have spent time in India in an ashram before he started his ministry.

In "Facts About Life After Death," Martin cites Matthew 23:40, and Jesus saying that "whatever you did for the least of these brothers, you did for me." From that, he concludes that "we are all from God and of God," and that each person's awareness is "a tiny sliver of a larger screen [God]."

"I have obviously a different take on things," he says. Martin contends that the one we are striving to repair has a side, the "love thy neighbor" side, that encourages unity, harmony and helping one another, while another side is me-oriented, selfish and harmful. He breaks it into Service to Self and Service to Others, and he suggests that those two sides are in conflict, which can be seen in the current political scene.

He's concerned that the U.S. political situation may deteriorate into anarchy and issues a clarion call to readers to be aware of political gaslighting and manipulation and to vote for candidates who are working to pull people together. "The Earth is going through a time of change," he writes. "We are moving into a new time, political chaos in this country, and hopefully we will get through it."

OTHER PATHS
True to his professional roots, Martin is still at work, serving

to Stop the Killings." The book's solution is to reach the kids most likely to engage in mass shootings that they are part of something greater and will never die. "And you know what? Once every 18- to 20-year-old male knows the truth, the killings will stop. That by itself is reason enough to get the word out," he writes.

His titles on life after death are his best-sellers. In mid-September, his book "Afterlife, The Whole Truth: Life After Death Books 1 & 2" was No. 1 in Amazon's Kindle rankings in the category New Age Reincarnation, and No. 10,237 overall in the Kindle store.

Martin says he does one or two podcast interviews each week, and that's where most people become acquainted with him and his books. Most of the podcasts he works with focus on spirituality or metaphysics. "There's a lot of them out there," he says. "I think there is a whole movement of people who are waking up to this reality."

He had an online radio show from 2007-2009 that dealt with a range of topics, focusing on the truth about life as he sees it, talking with people who said they had experienced reincarnation or had been clinically dead, academics who study the paranormal and reincarnation, ESP, near-death experiences—the gamut of the paranormal.

Martin has been married twice and has been with his second wife, Hilary, since 1987. He has three children: Hawley, Hans and Hannah Grace. Martin's passion for metaphysics draws mixed reactions from his immediate family.

His wife, he says, thinks it's just "woo-woo." "We don't talk a lot about it," he says. Hilary Martin describes herself as a traditional Christian, and they attend church together. She says that her husband's out-of-the-mainstream, metaphysical pursuits are simply a part of his personality.

"His other titles include some fiction and his own writings on the paranormal and other New Age topics. He writes with ease, just as he talks, and writes quickly. In June, days after the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, Martin released "A No-Brainer Way

A NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE

An excerpt from Stephen Hawley Martin's "Facts About Life After Death: Three Books in One Volume"

"LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MY NDE [NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCE], AND WHY I DO not think it would have been pleasant if I had not returned to life. I'm not proud of why it happened. I was in my mid-20s, and like many young men at that age, I thought I was immortal. I was a tractor driver in an apartment in an old townhouse with two other young men in the Bolton Hill neighborhood of Baltimore. I had a bad case of the flu, it was Saturday night, and I was upstairs in my bedroom, nursing the flu and reading a book, when I heard people downstairs coming into the apartment.

Before long, there was a party going on. Well, nursing the flu in my bedroom was not where I wanted to be on a Saturday night. At age 25, one is not about to miss out on a party no matter how sick one might be. So, even though I felt woozy, I climbed out of bed, put on some clothes and went downstairs to join in. I smoked and drank, and before long I realized I could hardly stand up. I practically knee-walked back upstairs and flopped on the bed, which seemed to spin like a helicopter propeller at liftoff. I felt nauseous, the spinning continued, and I was about to throw up. But I didn't think I could possibly stand up and get to the john.

Lying there, feeling awful, I felt my body rise up and come back down with every breath—like maybe I was actually going to lift off like a helicopter, when a sort of pressure started building up inside me. It kept building, and after a few moments, I had the sensation that I—my body—popped. Everything seemed to shift, and for a moment I panicked—had I exploded? The next thing I knew, I realized I was up near the ceiling looking down at my body on the bed.

I thought, "What am I doing up here?" I kept looking down at myself all sprawled out like road kill, and I thought, "Oh my God, am I dead?" With that, my awareness shifted. I could think, but it was a different type of thought—a much clearer thought process. I realized I was up near the ceiling, which puzzled me. I thought, "Wait a minute, I'm up here—not down there. How can I be up here?" And suddenly it dawned on me that I identified with whatever part of me seemed to be bumping against the ceiling, which meant it wasn't actually me down there on the bed—even though I was sure that was my body down there.

I had an epiphany. "Wow! I'm not my body—we aren't our bodies—we people aren't bodies." With that, I flipped upside down and was inches from the ceiling. I recall that I saw all the texture of the ceiling as though it were under a microscope—all the little dents and grooves and textures of it because it was so close to me. Then I swiveled and looked down at my body again. It looked very pale, and everything went black. The next thing I knew it was Sunday morning and I was awake, back in my body, feeling much better than when I'd crashed on the bed the night before.

Okay, so why do I think that I had remained dead, it would not have been pleasant? Because I was an atheist. Now, don't get me wrong. I don't think someone would be punished for being an atheist. It's just that, as a Scientific Materialist atheist, I didn't think there was such a thing as life after death. I thought that when you die, that's it. Lights out like when you pull the plug on a TV set or vacuum cleaner. Since I believed that was the case, I didn't know I needed to head for the light. Not only did I not see a light, it would not have occurred to me in a million years to look for one. ■



COURTESY: STEPHEN HAWLEY MARTIN

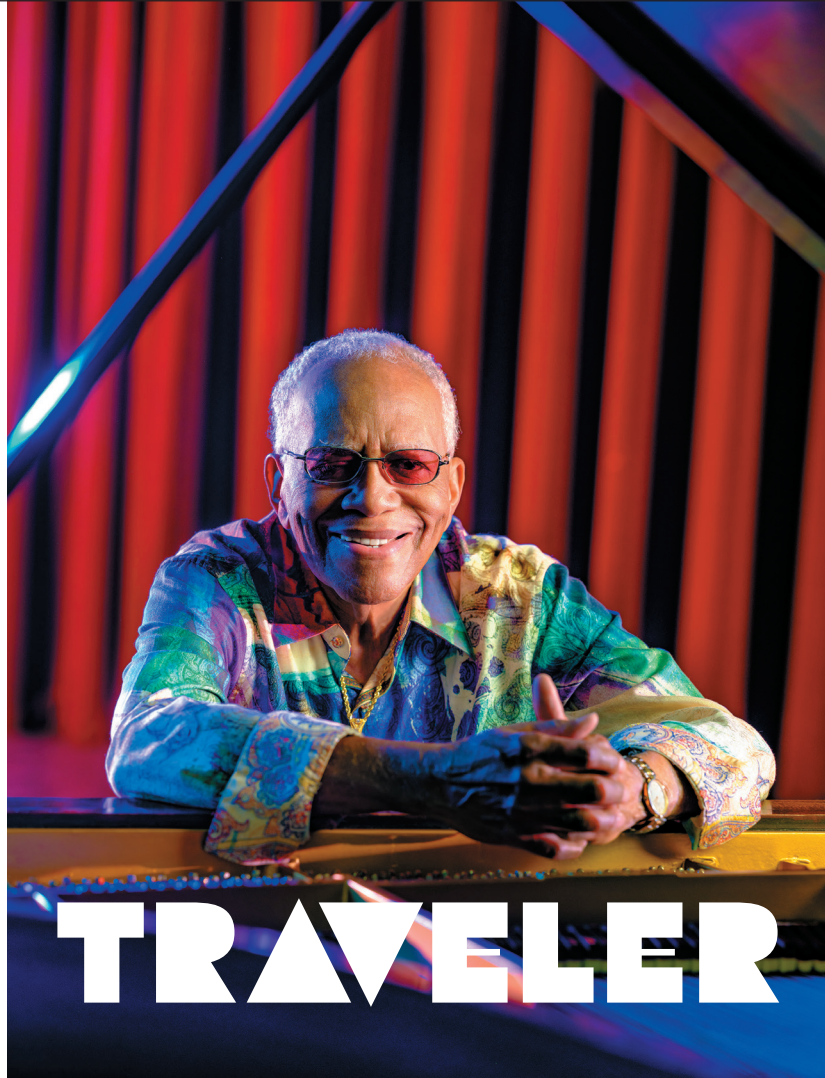
COSMIC

Keyboardist

LONNIE LISTON SMITH

transcends the boundaries of jazz, inspiring future generations to innovate in their own ways

BY DAVY JONES
PORTRAIT BY ZAID HAMID



TRAVELER

Call it the Big Bang of the cosmic sound.

In 1970, at the storied Record Plant recording studio in Los Angeles, Lonnie Liston Smith Jr. first sat at a Fender Rhodes electric piano. While he waited for the other players to unpack at a recording session for the Pharoah Sanders album "Thembi," Smith familiarized himself with the Rhodes. Then, as he began to play, history happened.

"Everybody ran over," Smith recalls, "Pharoah, the engineer, everyone said, 'What are you doing?' I said, 'I don't know, I'm just writing this song.' It's the first time I've played the Fender Rhodes! They said, 'We've got to record this right now. What are you going to call it?' It was studying astral projection, and it sounded like we were floating, so I said, 'Let's call it 'Astral Traveling.'"

Smith, a Richmond native, is credited with establishing a vast and influential area of the jazz landscape, one defined by a fluidity of sound and an uplifting spiritualism. As he sat at that Rhodes piano in L.A., his career was soaring skyward. Slated with great jazz players were already in his rearview mirror. But that particular moment found Smith drifting in a sonic direction that would soon reach across the globe and that has since spawned generations of musicians who have followed in his footsteps.

"Seems like all the songs I did—Give Peace a Chance and 'Expansions'—people say they need that now," Smith says. "They definitely need 'Visions of a New World' because I think this is the first time in the history of mankind when the whole world is shut down at the same time."

A MUSICAL UPRISING
Smith, 81, who now lives in Twin Hickory in Short Pump with his wife, Louise, grew up in Church Hill, surrounded by musicianship to a rare degree. His father, Lemmie Sr., sang with the nationally known gospel group The Harmonizing Four, rubbing elbows with some of the genre's biggest names.

All the gospel groups used to come by the house," the younger Smith remembers. "Sam Cooke when he was with the Soul Stirrers, the Tatis Hummingbirds, Sister Rosetta Tharpe. She was crazy about my father and the Harmonizing Four... She moved to Richmond, and I used to listen to her play guitar and sing. 'Wow, this is different.'"

Smith says his father was always on the lookout for new sounds, and not just within the world of gospel. "He loved all

kinds of music, and that was a great influence. In New York, The Harmonizing Four would do the Apollo, then he'd go and listen to all types of music, and he'd tell me about all these great musicians when he got back home.

Richmond also bustled with touring talent in the 1950s and '60s, at venues such as the Hippodrome, the Market Inn and the Mosque (now the Altria Theater). As he soaked it all in, Smith searched for his own voice.

Smith graduated from Armstrong High School in 1957. He speaks highly of his experience there—of the new facility the school moved into, and of the care he received from his teachers. He sought to make the most of every musical outlet, including the choir which he led as president in his senior year. (He was also named the "Friendless" and "best dressed" male student in his graduating class.)

"We used to all sing," he recalls. "I have two younger brothers, and they have the same beautiful tenor voice that my father had, but I can only sing the bass... I was in the marching band all the way from elementary school through college, singing in the choir, singing the bass parts, and of course, meanwhile, I was playing piano."

He continued his musical education at Morgan State University in Baltimore and joined the house band at the city's Royal Theatre. The Royal was part of a circuit, with sister theaters in New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia. "All these top acts would do seven days in each city," Smith recalls. "When they came through Baltimore, you were playing behind all the Motown acts. Curtis Mayfield, all of those great acts."

Smith had found his calling, but his searching continued. In 1963, he remembers, "I wanted an opportunity to play with all the top names in the 'Harmonizing Four'—four stories originated."

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"I was STUDYING astral projection, and it sounded like we were FLOATING, so I said, 'Let's call it 'ASTRAL TRAVELING.'"

A handmate of John Coltrane's when Coltrane was venturing deep into the avant-garde, Sanders looked to extract more human sounds from his instrument—growing and overflowing that evoked an intense range of emotions. Smith helped Sanders create major entries in the spiritual jazz canon, including the albums "Karma," "Journals of Thought," and the aforementioned "Thembi."

Richmond-based saxophonist and Philly 6 Oboone leader James "Yonky" Branch was living in San Francisco at the time, and he'd see Sanders play at every opportunity. He calls Smith's playing "essential to what Pharoah was doing."

"It combined the rhythm of jazz and African music along with what I called invocation-type music—a prayerful suspension of chord changes, performing this music based on how it feels... Lonnie made that modal music have body, spirituality and substance."

"When I got with Pharoah," Smith explains, "I had to try to figure out ways to get more sound. So I'm using my 10 fingers, but then sometimes you might use your forearm. You're not banging, you're trying to get more sound. Some..."

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"When they 'AMPLE it, they ARRANGE it differently. That's what we do with SONGS."

Byrd, Gary Barnacle and Roy Ayers. "I learned a lot in that situation," Smith says, "because I was around the rappers. They used to tease me, because I'm so laid back. I'd come in the room, and they'd say, 'Oh, man, get my coat. A cool breeze just came in.'"

It wasn't the first time he helped break down a barrier between the two genres. In 1968, his big-hop group Steps Ahead released "Talkin' All That Jazz," with lyrics that pushed back against accusations of artistic insensitivity associated with sampling. It incorporated the distinctive, looping bass notes from "Expansions," and when the time came to negotiate rights—then a hot-button issue, given mounting legal pressure around uncleared samples

—rapper and producer Daddy-O spoke directly with Smith. Securing sampling rights typically involves an upfront fee, a percentage of profits on both, yet Smith bestowed an unusually generous blessing by asking for neither. "Literally, he gave me the copyright for my song," Daddy-O recounts. "For me, it was almost an out-of-body experience."

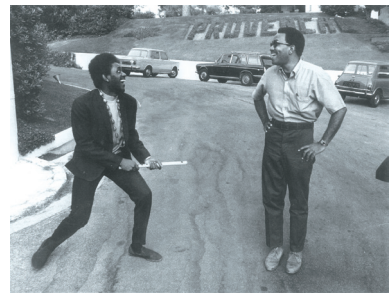
"I solidly believe that we should be connected to the music before us," Daddy-O adds, praising Smith's willingness to confer artist to artist. "There's absolutely no reason that the kind of fall that happened between me and Lonnie Liston Smith Jr. should not be an ongoing thing."

"It demonstrates yet again his openness and his open-mindedness," Branch says of Smith's embrace of sampling. "The idea of expanding yourself beyond what you immediately see. He's just been a really important figure in jazz music."

Morgan State University's board of regents agreed, and on May 15, 2024, the class of '68 was awarded an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree. He calls it a "proud moment"—a highlight during a year in which public appearances were scarce. Smith has continued performing, often standing at his keys in recent years, when the time came to negotiate rights—then a hot-button issue, given mounting legal pressure around uncleared samples

Plans to tour are on hold, owing to pandemic concerns and travel restrictions. He's featured on the eleventh volume in Adrian Young and Ali Shabazz Muhammad's "Jazz to Death" collaborative LP series, out later this month. And he has intends to return to the stage when conditions improve.

"Lonnie would say to me, 'Hey, man, I just want to bring people some beauty,'" Miller says. "He didn't have to take a jazz appreciation course to do it. That was his mission, to create music that had a vibe, that had depth to it, but also had something that would bring the community together."



times you reach [inside the piano] to the strings. Trying all kinds of things." Given Smith's adventurous approach, both with Sanders and soon after with Argentine saxophonist Gato Barbieri, it seemed preordained that he would link up with Miles Davis in the early 1970s. Recording for Davis' albums "On the Corner" and "Big Fun" demanded Smith make new strides in his development as an artist, some of which were spurred by Davis' words of encouragement: "What the f— are you waiting for?"

"That's how Miles made you strong," Smith says. "Kid got upset if you weren't creating every day or every night you were performing with him."

One crucial leap forward during Smith's time with Davis resulted not from the bandleader's gruff motivational style, but from Smith's application of the tools Davis was using. "He had all these pedals hooked up on the floor on his trumpet,"

he recalls. "I said, 'Now if I hook these pedals up to the Fender Rhodes, I wonder what would happen?' And it worked."

"It's not often that you get to be innovative and popular and uplifting all the same time," Branch says of Smith. "He may be the definitive musician to combine those three things."

"I had to try to FIGURE OUT ways to get more SOUND. So I'm using my 10 FINGERS, but then sometimes you might use your FOREARM."

Smith recorded his 1973 debut, "Astral Traveling," at the encouragement of Bob

Thiele, the producer and Flying Dutchman label owner who recorded countless jazz greats, including John Coltrane. Thiele's bassist and composer was just 16 when he was introduced to Smith, yet Miller quickly earned Smith's confidence, and some of Miller's earliest compositions found a home on Smith's Columbia-era albums.

"He provided me with that stage as a writer," Miller says, "and he would let me arrange the band and tell them what I thought they should play which was kind of crazy because I'm this little, 19-year-old kid instructing the older guys. But he got a kick out of it."

Identifying and empowering promising young players is among the highest callings a masterful jazz musician can answer. Miller draws a direct line from Smith's support to that of Miles Davis, with whom Miller would also go on to collaborate.

"Once [Smith] figured out that I had some talent," Miller recalls, "he's like, 'C'mon, do your thing.' And I'm doing the same thing with young guys in my group. I don't know if Miles had a mentor, or if it came from him, but that's a tradition that's being passed down through generations."

LEGACY AND INFLUENCE
There may be no better lens through which to view Smith's lasting impact than that of Denon Harris, who plays keys for Richmond group Butcher Brown and produces beats as DJ Harrison. "Here's a guy who took his dream and his vision and actually made it happen," Harris says. "For a lot of creatives who are here in Richmond, that's definitely influential."

Harris grew up surrounded by Smith's music—"My dad had a lot of his records," he says—and he sought out those same albums upon starting his own collection. He's since continued down Smith's trailblazing path by customizing his sound with his keys. "He creates his own textures," Harris says. "I've definitely picked up on that from him."

Smith returned to Richmond from New York in 1988, seeing in his hometown qualities that local artists such as Harris continue to benefit from: a location that's convenient for East Coast touring and easy access to air travel. Ironically, Smith was in Atlanta being interviewed for radio when Butcher Brown first crossed his radar a handful of years ago. "The interviewer said, 'Man, have you heard this group from Richmond, Butcher Brown?' Smith made contact via my records, and he was in Atlanta being interviewed for radio when Butcher Brown first crossed his radar a handful of years ago. "The interviewer said, 'Man, have you heard this group from Richmond, Butcher Brown?' Smith made contact via my records, and he was in Atlanta being interviewed for radio when Butcher Brown first crossed his radar a handful of years ago. "The interviewer said, 'Man, have you heard this group from Richmond, Butcher Brown?' Smith made contact via my records, and he was in Atlanta being interviewed for radio when Butcher Brown first crossed his radar a handful of years ago."



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laborator during this period was two-time Grammy winner Marcus Miller. The iconic bassist and composer was just 16 when he was introduced to Smith, yet Miller quickly earned Smith's confidence, and some of Miller's earliest compositions found a home on Smith's Columbia-era albums.

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plunging is paying homage," Harris says. "We grew up on this, and we want to show the artist we're sampling. They know about that, and we're trying to keep it alive."

Richmond DJ Zak Young, who produces beats as DJ Mentos, cites Smith's use of space as another reason his tracks are revered.

"With music that's real dense, it's harder to find isolated sounds," Young says. "But with a Lonnie Liston Smith record, you might have an organ sound or a synth sound, and the vibrations that go along with it. That airy sparse sound that we appreciate in his music would allow a producer to isolate something more specific."

The openness with which Smith has approached music throughout his life extends to hearing his songs sampled. "I look at it like it's an arrangement," Smith says. "When they sample it, they arrange it differently. That's what we do with songs. We arrange it our way, but somebody else might record it and say, 'OK, I can put this right on.'"

Smith got to close that loop and collaborate in real time on the groundbreaking 1978 album "Visions of a New World," which featured a sampling of Smith's music by the hip-hop group Steps Ahead. "That's the beauty of it," Harris says. "It's not just sampling, it's collaboration. It's not just sampling, it's collaboration. It's not just sampling, it's collaboration."

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