

Arlington Arts Scene

Steve Carter is jazzing up the town

BY SUSAN DANSEYAR
STAFF WRITER

For as long as he can remember, Steve Carter has been playing the guitar.

He doesn't remember exactly when he picked the instrument up but knows it has always been an important part of his life. Describing himself as a child of the '60s, the Arlington resident said he played rock 'n' roll, various styles of blues and gospel/soul before discovering his love for the jazz he now plays.

"My father was a big jazz fan, so I've always been exposed to it," Carter said, listing some of his mentors like guitarists Jim Hall, Wes Montgomery and Joe Pass.

For the most part Carter now plays music from "The Great American Songbook," a style he describes as traditional jazz begun by musicians like George Gershwin and Duke Ellington and made popular by players like Stan Getz. Always on electric guitar, Carter performs on a regular basis both as a soloist and with singer Skye Hurlburt from Lincoln, R.I., in a duo called Travelin' Light.

"What's unique about my approach to playing now is the variety of sounds I simulate," Carter said. "I've played a lot of styles — jazz, rock, pop — and I've worked with symphony orchestras, 18-piece bands and now with a duo. When I perform solo, I incorporate the sounds of other instruments into my guitar playing."

Through his own recording label, Frogstory Records, Carter cut a solo CD in 1997 called Act One, which has songs by Duke Ellington, Billie

Holiday, Oscar Hammerstein II, Herbie Hancock and John Lewis. A few of the songs were recorded live at The Porch in Nashua, N.H. He is currently working on a second CD — Act Two — as well as one featuring Travelin' Light. Carter's new solo CD will be a collection of duets, each part played by him and put together in the production process. Several of the songs, he said, will be pieces he has written himself.

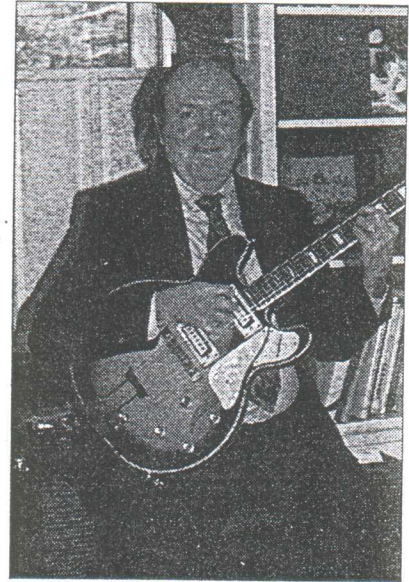
In addition to recording, Carter performs throughout the area and locally at Royal Books, the Heart of the Arts Festival each year and the Arlington Center of the Arts, which he helped establish 22 years ago.

Currently, Carter works as a computer programmer for Tibersoft Corporation in Needham. For 25 years, however, Carter taught at Berklee School of Music in Boston while performing on a full-time basis at "the hot spots" in the city.

Now he plays his guitar every day but only performs a few times a week. His wife, Marilyn, is his business manager and does all bookings for his solo and duo acts. She also updates his web page with performing dates.

Carter takes jazz music quite seriously and said he is often dismayed at how Americans take it for granted. "For a long time, jazz had the allure of the 'forbidden' because it was largely performed by black musicians," he said. "Then it became acceptable, and now it's so acceptable that some people almost view it like they would wallpaper."

Carter said he rarely has time to go out and hear performances. When he does, though, he likes to



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN DANSEYAR

Steve Carter played guitar last weekend at an artists' reception held in An American Bed & Breakfast.

hear jazz music at Skuller's and the Regatta Bar in Cambridge.

To relax, Carter enjoys listening to classical music by Bach, Beethoven and Stravinsky.

He and his wife have two grown daughters. "They're not musical, but both are artistic and both enjoy dance," Carter said. His 23-year-old daughter, Sheri, did the graphic design on his CD and his 28-year-old daughter, Wendy, took the photograph of him (playing in the conservatory of An American Bed & Breakfast) featured on the back cover.

For additional information on upcoming performances, call Marilyn Carter at 648-5185 or see Steve Carter's web page at www.world.std.com/~swc/