



TRICK

Tricks of the Trade

Neil Byron Westbrook, first-born of Jamie and Neil Westbrook, was so eager to get on with his life that, while his mother was being wheeled to the delivery room, he popped out on the gurney and immediately demanded attention. This was on January 22, 1964. He hasn't changed much.

To distinguish him from his father, the family called him by his abbreviated middle name, "By." His mother, determined to name her son after a favorite poet, chose Lord Byron, whose birth date was the same as Neil's, 177 years earlier. In addition to a common name and birth date, the Byrons shared the experience of being the offspring of military fathers.

Neil's appetite for living persisted and grew. Brilliant in school, his studies were easily mastered, and his prowess in sports began at an early age as an enthusiastic participant in Little League baseball and Pop Warner football. He held a yellow belt in Judo, and from junior high through college he lettered in football and track and field. In athletic interests he followed the heritage of his paternal grandfather, who played baseball for the Negro League, and later trained many of the Golden Glove Boxers in St. Louis, Missouri.

While in junior high, Neil's talent for writing earned the respect of his teachers and peers. A finalist in a national literary competition, he received accolades and invitations to speak at numerous civic organizations. Much of Neil's written output was on the subject of inadequacies and injustices in the medical field.

Neil's cheery charisma made him popular with his peers, and his drive for independent business direction was apparent by age ten, when he organized other Pop Warner League members into a work group called "Kid Power," soliciting odd

jobs in his home area. In junior high he founded a band, with himself as drummer; later, he directed a modeling troupe, "Chic Unlimited." A probable source for the stimulation of these early ventures was the genes of his maternal great-grandfather, who persisted in rebuilding his family business after several KKK burnings, and for whom a school in Columbus, Mississippi is named.

From the time he founded the band, music was never absent from Neil's life, and the beat of the tempo was as vital to him as his own heartbeat. With the band, he originated and presented a variety of entertainment, sometimes as soloist, but principally as choreographer/producer. As an adult, the world of entertainment became Neil's reality, whatever other activities were necessary to maintain a livelihood, social contacts or business opportunities. His job experiences were numerous and brief; Show Biz was his life, even when the choice was between eating or entertaining. Girls came and went, but not even his dearest lovelies could compete with music as the focus of his energies. In 1982, when he moved to the Oceanside, California area, he met and teamed up with Darnell "Magic" Washington. Along the way, Neil had acquired the nickname "Trick," and the birth of "Magic-Trick Productions" was a natural.

"Trick" soon made other connections and contracts to write, produce and perform in original creations for singles, albums, videos and live entertainment. Of his namesake, Lord Byron, it is said that he was "too romantic to refrain from blowing bubbles and too realistic to refrain from pricking them." "Trick," too, composes both romantic and realistic interpretations of the human condition. An American Renaissance man, with New Age music, his hip-hop folk rap and soft rap lyrics and style are understandable and danceable. Catch "Trick" on the Mixmasters album produced by Kurtis Blow, MCA Records.