LABELLE: NO MORE HALF STEPPING!

When searching for a song to sing, LaBelle looks first for pretty melodies. This marks a departure from the R and B things she did while leading the Bluebelles.

By VASHTI McKENZIE

The space-age costumes and glitter are gone out of Patti Labelle's act. And so is Nona Hendryx and Sara Dash.

After 16 years of leading Patti
Labelle and the Bluebells and then
Labelle, she has emerged as a solo
artist with an album solid in
performance, songs and
production. On stage, she's an
intense phenomenon totally
uninhibited.

"I don't know how I do it, I just have it." said Labelle from her Philadelphia home one afternoon.

"You could call it nervous energy. The audience is so good to

energy. The audience is so good to me, they bring out everything in me. I never feel inhibited."

Transition

It's been almost a year since the popular rock female group shocked the music industry with news of their dissolution. Labelle has successfully navigated the stormy waters of transition to solo artist.

"I feel fine now, but I was scared



at first," she said. "I'm really not alone on stage. I don't feel alone. I feel confident. I feel very good.
"I miss them but I'm glad to be

Labelle isn't using one designer for her stage costumes. She plans to give several new designers a chance. The feathers, bells, beads, glitter and hardware are gone from her wardrobe.

"I'm a little more sophisticated now but still outrageous," she said laughing. "I like more sophisticated, simple and less complicated things.

"I think about the things I used to wear on stage. I must have had a good sense of humor."

Mrs. Edwards

Around her Philadelphia home, she's known as Mrs. Armstead Edwards and 4-year-old son, Zorrie and two adopted brothers, 16 and 20.

Her husband is the principal of a Philadelphia middle school. The kids say "Mr. Edwards is married to Patti Labelle and snicker."

When they get their nerves up they'll tell him they liked his wife's album or concert performance.

"They love music and are into jazz," said Labelle about her two new sons. "They love my music. But they are really quite shy and don't talk to me, about me a lot. Little Zorrie does talk.

"He's very musically inclined,"
she said proudly. "He has a very
good ear and sings on key."

As far as encouraging him in the music business, Labelle says she will not take the wind out of the bubble.

"I went through 14 years of hard times," she said. "I'm glad I did it because now I appreciate the good times. I will not encourage



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