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What's Happening

by IDA Peters

KEVIN HOOKS

Opening this week is the long awaited movie "Sounder" starring Cecily Tyson as Rebecca; Kevin Hooks as David Lee; Paul Winfield as Nathan Lee; Yvonne Jarrell as Josie Mae and Eric Hooks as Earl.

Kevin Hooks the 14-year-old son of Robert Hooks (Mr. T. himself) visited the AFRO home office this week with his father.

He tells us he's a ninth grade student at Friends' Central School in Philadelphia and will probably be a basketball player or an actor. He plans to attend UCLA.

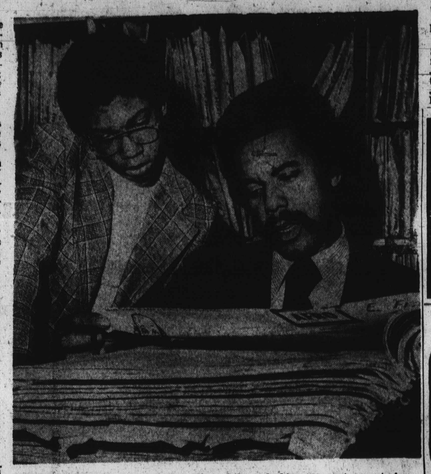
Put "Sounder" on your "Must" list. The setting is the Deep South, Baton Rouge, La., during the depression.

Kevin plays a boy who sets out on a long journey in search of his sharecropper father, who has been arrested and sent to a labor camp for stealing food for his family. During his travels, the boy is awakened to the great potential and dignity of his race by a compassionate black schoolteacher.

This is one of the first black plays to treat the black family with dignity and show the closeness of family members which truly existed.

The most moving scene, (and we admit we cry at movies) was between Paul Winfield, the father, and Kevin. The father had just returned from the prison camp with a bum leg and Kevin does not want to go off to school and leave him. You have to listen closely as the father tells his son "whenever you go well always love you."

This scene is especially moving as Kevin says "Dad, I'm going to miss this old raggedy place . . . but I sure don't going to worry about it."



KEVIN HOOKS young star of "Sounder" visited the home offices of the AFRO-AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS and is shown here in the Library looking over past news stories with his father "Mr. T." Robert Hooks, star of "Trouble Man".

LEFT BANK

Mayor William Donald Schaefer issued a proclamation to the Left Bank Jazz Society proclaiming this week "The Left Bank Jazz Society Week. The LBJS concluded its ninth year of presenting jazz concerts in the Baltimore area on a non-profit basis.

Including the nine years of operation the LBJS presented The Duke Ellington Orchestra. At this concert the Mayor's office presented Duke Ellington with a key to the city. After expressing his gratitude to the audience in many foreign languages he told the Baltimore audience that they were the most receptive audience for which he has ever played and that he really looks forward to coming to Baltimore.

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9:30 AM

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Alastair Sim stars in Charles Dickens' immortal Yuletide classic depicting how the true spirit of Christmas penetrates even old Scrooge's flinty heart.

11 AM

IT'S CHRISTMAS

Baltimore's own Queen of Jazz Ethel Ennis and Washington, D.C.'s famed guitarist Charlie Byrd join in a musical "spelling" of Christmas featuring nine favorite tunes. *Presented by Equitable Trust Company and National Beer.*

10 PM

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

The Glendale Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Carmen Dragon, presents a beautifully moving Holiday musical special. *Presented by C. Hoffberger Company.*

10:30 PM

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WBAL TV 11

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Yaphet Kotto

YAPHET KOTTO

By GERARD BURKE

Yaphet Kotto is not one to hide the way he feels.

He gave that away last week with advance publicity for "Across 110th Street." Kotto said during a luncheon interview "It's tough for me to do an interview because I'm a pure actor . . . I get very defensive if I feel someone is questioning my acting integrity."

Kotto's comment came after some murky questions by reporters pricked his artistic sensibilities. The New York native has worked hard to become an actor and resents any suggestions that sell his toil and integrity short.

Although Kotto has been in the acting business 14 years, he says he has been actor only the last three of those years. He explained by saying he "didn't really know" who he was during the majority of those years and was not able to make his living by acting.

While acting in more than 110 plays, Kotto held "very little-bit job there is in New York."

• • •

He generally defined an actor as being "a person who is self-realized and is therefore able to assume the aspects of another person's character," and excluded the struggling actor-Kotto from that category.

Kotto told of how he sought to have natural talents by improving his diction — with a tape recording of John Cameron Swayze and a textbook — as well as his dancing ability.

Satisfied with his progress after months of work, he enrolled in the American Conservatory Theatre in Pittsburgh and followed that with summer stock work. Then came off-Broadway roles in "Black Monday," "In White America," "Blood Knot," among others.

• • •

Kotto moved into the "The Zulu and the Zayda" on Broaway and then in Los Angeles. Out of the latter sojourn came TV jobs in "Big Valley," "Death Valley Days" and "Cowboy in Africa."

Kotto won critical raves from his performance as and acting in "The Limit," Kotto was able to start his own film company — Pioneer Enterprises.

The broad-shouldered actor's route through show business may seem like that of a star on the rise, but he knows better.

"I remember playing to ten people in the house in 'In White America' and people would make me clean off the stage before they came on "Kotto said the acting business is a cruel, gruelling profession. People who get into it have to be tough."

• • •

When a reporter brought up the subject of "black films" and some of the negative publicity they have been getting, Kotto leaned back in his chair and laughed. Then he recalled his membership in a black actor's company some 12 years ago and of how the actors were saying "Give us films that black people can act in."

Now, apparently spoiled by the many 'black" films available, part of the public is downgrading the films without the recognition that they are providing work for black technicians, writers and stuntmen — not to mention actors. Of the films, Kotto said simply, "We need them for the black psyche."

• • •

Kotto revealed that he "had all the opportunity in the world to play 'Shaft'" but added 'there was nothing for me to play in 'Shaft' it was a one-dimensional role . . . It could make $15 million . . . but I must have my artistry and integrity."

Kotto apparently found those ingredients in his current role, as the incorruptible detective, Lt. Pope in "Across 110th Street." Kotto says, "Pope can't live long because he's pure, because he can't be bought . . . That means he's dead."

'Across 110th Street' deals with a trio of blacks who rob the Mafia's Harlem numbers bank and how the mob brutally retaliates.

The film, at a couple of points, is quite violent. Anthony Franchiosa, starring as mobster Nick D'Salvio, deals out a vicious beating when he catches one of the blacks in a club.

Kotto felt no need to defend the movie or its violent scenes but did say 'He (Franchiosa) didn't go in there to kill him. He went in there to show him (and everybody) else who's boss."

• • •

It would be easy to read several sociological and political messages into "Across 110th Street."

• • •

"CLEOPATRA"

Egypt's star Bersie Casey, who recently completed the starring role in "Hit Man," has been signed to play the male lead opposite Tamara dobson in Warner Bros.' "Cleopatra Jones."

Casey will portray the community leader of an anti-drug movement who saves the life of "Cleopatra Jones," a Black international agent.

DUKE ELLINGTON receive a silver plate which takes the place of the Key To The City from Clinton Lawson representing Mayor Schaefer at the Left Bank Jazz Society Concert last week.

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"Cicely Tyson, if she doesn't receive an Academy Award nomination as Best Actress, then something is very wrong with the system." —Black Stars

"Cicely Tyson is a wispy, fragile tower of strength. She is all endurance, all love, in fact, all the great black mothers rolled into that tiny frame of hers. And those hypnotic, piercing eyes! The character is monumental, the performance, superlative." —Hugh Thompson, Black American

"Cicely Tyson, if there is any justice, she will have an Oscar come March." —Peter Bailey, Jet

"You'll be missing a truly magnificent experience if you don't see 'Sounder'." —Time

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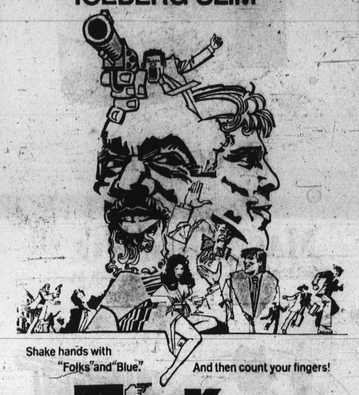

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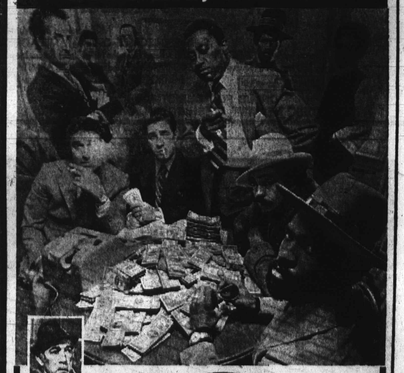

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