What's Happening

by IDA Peters

Round-Up 1973

1973 was a boss year for black films and in last Tuesday's AFRO, we gave you a rundown of all the exciting things that happened to us during the year.

1974 promises to be just as exciting if we can solve the energy crisis or ignore it. John Williams held a press conference this past Thursday at the Mechanic Theatre to kick off the new season of ACT IV and tell us about the new live shows coming for 1974.

The Arena Players are holding black tie receptions at the New Playhouse on Orchard Street to premiere the play "Curious Savage" last night and tonight (Friday).

Next week, we'll tell you about our luncheon meeting with Atoy Wilson, the first black Ice Follies star coming soon to the Civic Center.

Jim Kelly, the Karate champion who starred with the late Bruce Lee in "Enter The Dragon" will be in town next week for press previews on his new pix "Black Bart Jones."

We'll also get to look at the new film "Five On The Black Hand Side" to open around the country on January 30th.

Tuesday night, the place to be is Center Stage for opening of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

Special guest in our city will be Dr. Phyllis Harrison-Ross. She's the Director of the Community Mental Health Center at Metropolitan Hospital in N.Y. and co-author of new book, "The Black Child-A Parents' Guide".

Did you make the new Capitol Center at Largo, Md. during the holidays? Yes...that's Vashti Smith McKenzie of Baltimore, Houston and Portland who is guest hostess for the pre-game and post-game shows on Capitol Center's in-house TV. Coming up...her stories on how she acted as MC for the Jackson 5 and 50,000 screaming teenybopers last week...and the TV interviews between the N.Y. Knicks and Capitol Bullets.

* * *

RECORDS

The December 29th issue of Cash Box lists the top R and B Singles of 1973 as Marvin Gaye, "Let's Get It On"; Eddie Kendricks "Keep On Truckin"; Gladys Knights and The Pips, "Neither One of Us"; Billy Paul, "Me and Mrs. Jones" and Brighter Side of Darkness, "Love Jones".

JUNE

Josephine Baker came to America for four concerts at Carnegie Hall plus celebrate her Golden Jubilee as an entertainer and her 67th Birthday. Her recent appearance on the "Today" show was a disaster.

* * *

Nellie Lutcher, "Fine Brown Frame" was back in N.Y. after 25 year absence at Barney Joseph's Cookery.

Early June issues carried the report of the Jackson 5 tour of Japan.

"The Blacks" brought a new kind of theatre to Kennedy Center in D.C. put on by Robert Hooks' D.C. Black Repertory Company.

Our June 12-16 issue covered an exclusive interview with Mandrill and a report about the 85,000 people attending the Dimensions Unlimited Freedom Festival at RFK Stadium in D.C.

* * *

Liberian President and Mrs. William R. Tolbert were entertained at our Eutaw St. office.

Mrs. Elizabeth Moss as official hostess.

Before the end of June, we were in Houston, Texas to accept an award for Clean Block from NPA and preview "Shaft In Africa" and talk with Vonetta McGee who co-starred with Richard Roundtree.

Stevie Wonder was a real tornado according to correspondent Fred Douglass as crowds turned out to see the eighth wonder of the world at Merriweather Post Pavilion.

June 27th, we lunched with Pam Grier and previewed her new movie, "Scream, Blacula, Scream."

JULY

July 5, talked with Nikki Giovanni who was touring the East promoting her record "Ripple In The Pond."

That week-end we cruised on the Chesapeake Bay on the Pepsi-Cola Skipjack and took a crowd to D.C. to see Billy Daniels, Kyle Johnson and Royce Wallace in "Normann, Is That You?" at the National Theatre.

WAR got over-programed and failed to show at the Baltimore Civic Center.

John Murphy III, AFRO president made the BOAC 747 trip to London and wrote a 4-week series "England's Great In Summer."

At this time, we heard more and more about Tamara Dobson and how great the movie "Cleopatra Jones" would be.

July 24-About this time we started a "Who Is Your Favorite Actor?" contest. Top contestants were Ron O'Neal, Billy Dee Williams, Sidney Poitier, Richard Roundtree, Max Julien, Robert Hooks, Fred Williamson, and the late Bruce Lee. He was listed because he got so many votes.

"Cleopatra Jones" with Baltimore's Tamara Dobson opened in N.Y. with a sensational $109,008 gross in two theatres.

Carl Anderson, born in Lynchburg and raised in D.C. called to tell us about his role as Judas in "Jesus Christ Superstar."

AUGUST

Fred Douglass talked with Ike and Tina Turner at Merriweather Post and Robert Guillaume Played "Othello" in the Shakespeare Summer Festival in D.C.

Douglass also talked with B. B. King who gave an electrifying performance at Merriweather Post and said he had "paid his dues."

Toriano "Tito" Jackson of the Jackson 5 and his wife Delores were proud parents of a baby boy on August 3 but he was in Japan and didn't see the baby until Monday, August 13.

The youngest member of the Temptations, Damon Harris married Christina Combs in N.Y.

Mid-August we were off to Burbank to meet and eat with Jim Kelly and preview "Enter The Dragon".

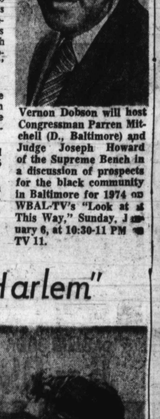
The August 19th James Brown concert at the Baltimore Civic Center was cancelled with three different reports as to reasons.

Late August, we had a tremendous interview with Tony E. King who came to town for lunch and promoted "Gordon's War" with Paul Winfield. We'll be looking to hear more about his "Super Spok" in 1974.

Fred Douglass talked with and we ran his stories on Santana, Gladys Knight and the Pips and New Birth. Also, D'Jaye and Julius Brockington and the United Chair.

To wind up August 1973, we talked with Judy Pace in Burbank ... Jim Brown's main squeeze in "The Iams." (Next week, we'll wind-up 1973 for you.)

Franklin Ajaye recently appeared on The Flip Wilson Show and is a new nutty comic you should watch in 1974.



Vernon Dobson will host Congressman Parren Mitchell (D., Baltimore) and Judge Joseph Howard of the Supreme Bench in a discussion of prospects for the black community in Baltimore for 1974 on WBAL-TV's "Look at at This Way," Sunday, January 6, at 10:30-11 PM on TV 11.

"Hell Up In Harlem"

Larry Cohen, writer-producer-director of American International's current release, "Hell Up In Harlem," sequel to the highly successful adventure crime-drama, "Black Caesar," emerges from a pile of loose coal with star Fred Williamson, who continues the exploits of an underworld overlord in the exciting film.

Cohen, always a stickler for realism, had just demonstrated to Williamson the proper method for going through a pile of coal with a submachine gun. After Fred had emulated the feat, both emerged covered with coal dust and suddenly realized that they had emerged exactly the same hue.

Then they thought about the price that coal was bringing on today's fuel-short market and, concurrently, how they would fare if "Hell Up In Harlem," added up to the grosses of "Black Caesar" and it all added up to long-green, a mutually admirable color.

"Hell Up In Harlem" additionally stars D'Urville Martin, Margaret Avery, Julius W. Harris and Gloria Hendry.

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BLACK EXPERIENCE

Monumental Music Hall

Synoptic '73

by Connie E. Brown

As we start 1974, Monumental Music Hall is just seven months old, but in that short time we have met the greats and near greats.

Coming Events

Will be talking to Hugh Masekela, presenting his latest Chisa/Blue Thumb release "Masekela: Introducting Hedzoleh Sounds," at the Cellar Door, Washington, D.C. this week.

On Monday, a preview of karate champ Jim Kelly's new movie, "Black belt Jones" and lunch with Kelly on Wednesday.

June 1973

The first week, was full of anticipation as I visualized meeting the top personalities of the music world. But this was short lived, because on a tour of the proofroom, got something in my eye.

Was rushed to University Hospital, had to stay out the rest of the week with one "blue eye," and missed my first interview.

The following Saturday, my first assignment took me out in 90 degree heat at high noon to judge a bird house contest for the Bureau of Recreation which was directed by Mrs. Virginia Baker, supervisor of Children's Activities and Publicity. (A fitting first for this city's would be greatest music critic.)

The beginning of the second week brought on a real rush of excitement and Monumental Music Hall came to life.

Isaiah Jackson, assistant conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra left for Vienna and Eugene Walker conducted Baltimore's Big Band in War Memorial Plaza.

The Persuasions, booked as warm-up performers at a show featuring Don McClean, received a standing ovation and were the stars of the show. During McClean's performance a fight broke out and firecrackers were set off.

Helping to judge the entries and doing the layout for Mr. Bumbles Contest was a lot of fun; plus it provided time out from the hectic pace of meeting deadlines.

During a brief interview with the Persuasions, Sweet Joe (Joseph Russell) was kissing my hand and Tubo (Herbert Rhand) was offering me fresh cherries. Can you imagine how much effort it took for me to concentrate on completing that interview.

"The Student Prince" and "The Desert Song" were the first plays of the summer season. Attending plays, as stated by a friend, was better than movies because you could see the actors in person and get to talk with them.

June Jordan delivered a speech "Black English: The Politics of Language" at a Department of Education workshop, Wednesday, June 13, and afterwards, drove her to Washington, D.C. It was a real experience talking to a soul sister who had her own ideas about how she could help her people and was not afraid to put herself on the line in trying to do so.

* * *

The month of June was quite memorable because I received my first letters of congratulations and thanks; and collected a lot of autographs.

JULY

The All-American Youth Honor Musicians, prior to presenting eight concerts in Moscow and Leningrad, rehearsed for two days on the College Park Campus of the University of Maryland. It was a pleasure meeting Dr. Isaac Greggs, band director, and four outstanding young musicians who were utilizing their performing ability to further international understanding and goodwill through music.

The night I met Jodie Myers, the first local talent to record the National Bob song, prove to be another chapter of my musical experiences.

The talent that's Jodie is difficult to limit to a singular adjective; for there's a combination of many qualities that make up this young singer's style.

In addition to her warm personality, Jodie has a special magical charm that captured her audience and of Jackson State, and is left a spellbound. She won a recording contract with Paramount Records.

The play "Norman, Is That You?," was opening at the National in Washington, starring Billy Daniels and Kyle Johnson.

A lover of plays, was so excited about attending this opening, told all my friends I was going to see "Norman, You Out There?"

Talking to Kyle Johnson backstage, told him of the new title I had given his play. He rolled over laughing.

Sporting a cool halter dress and platforms, took in a Baltimore Symphony Orchestra Pops concert featuring composer/musician Errol Garner.

As customary, Garner sat on three telephone books playing "hot" and "cool" jazz.

* * *

Sylvia Robinson, vice-president of All-Platinum Records and formerly of the 50's hit duo, Mickey and Sylvia, was "Pillow Talk" of town.

With the temperatures in the eighties, Johnny Mathis opened his Merriweather Post performance dressed in a burgundy velvet suit. After three songs under those bright lights, he soon departed and returned in one of the coolest white suits you ever saw.

Ella Fitzgerald, appearing at the Merriweather Post, kept the audience spellbound with her amazing wide repertory.

At a theatre party met Tamara Dobson, star of the super Karate movie "Cleopatra Jones." Her visit to the AFRO office brighten the day for many a typewearY fellow.

AUGUST

Darrold Hunt was appointed Associate Conductor to the Baltimore Symphony. He is 32 and single.

The James Brown Show, scheduled the same time as a Model Cities Soul Festival, was cancelled by the Civic Center.

After talking with Brown changed my impression of him, just being a song and dance man. Found him to be very concerned with the education and job opportunities available for black people.

Interviewed Damon Harris of the Temptations and got invited to his wedding, which was being held the following week in New York.

At the reception in the Crystal Room, Terrace On The Park, danced with all the Temptations. Left with a happy heart and tired feet.

(To be continued next week.)

OPERA/SOUTH

Dolores Ardoyno, general manager, Opera/South, sponsored by the Mississippi Inter-Collegiate Opera Guild made up of Jackson State, Utica Junior College and Tougaloo College, wrote to say they had planned to call on the AFRO, but had hit Baltimore Monday in all the snow and barely made it through.

Opera/South will being doing Mississippi's first production of "Othello" this Spring and next fall plan a premiere of an opera by a black composer, which Dr. Longe of the Afro-American Institute said made Opera/South considered as prime candidates for the 1975 Festival of Black Arts in Lagos.

For the bicentennial year, Opera/South will commission an opera based on Margaret Walker's prize-winning novel "Jubilee." Dr. Walker is on the faculty of Jackson State, and is also a member of the National Board. Since '76 is also Jackson State's centennial year, it will be a double celebration.

* * *

AFRICAN MUSIC

An informal lecture on African music will be given by Munyiri Stephen Karigu on Wednesday, January 9, at 1:30 p.m. at the Pratt library's Gorsuch Avenue center, Gorsuch and Kirk Avenues.

Mr. Karigu, a citizen of the Republic of Kenya, is a student at the Bay College of Maryland. His lecture concludes a series of four on African culture.

Admission to these programs is free. Interested members of the public are extended a cordial invitation.

De De Pierce

JAZZ CONCERT

Preservation Hall Jazz Band will appear in concert at Goucher College, Sunday, January 13 at 8:00 p.m. in Kraushaar Auditorium.

The band is on tour from New Orleans where members of the group all took part in the birth of this American art form.

Members of the Preservation Hall De De Band, who will appear at Goucher, were among the bands that marched to and from the cemetery for funerals, they were in the wagons that drove up and down (French Quarter streets and battled it out when two bands met at a corner.

Billie Pierce, on piano, arrived in New Orleans in 1920 after touring in the south. Her vocal style is influenced by Bessie Smith, whom she heard as a teenager in Pensacola, Florida.

Traditional African Dance

At Theatre Project

Baltimore's new African dance group, Olufunmilayo and Company, will play a return engagement at the Theatre Project, Baltimore's free theatre at 45 W. Preston St., with six concerts of traditional West African dance, music and song, the first weekend in January.

Performances by the 12-member company will be at 8 and 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, Jan. 4 and 5, and at 2 and 8 p.m. on Sunday.

The group played to enthusiastic audiences at the Theatre Project in October, performing social dances, play dances and warrior dances from West Africa. The program also included a 40-minute section choreographed by Olufunmilayo, combining a number of dances and songs to depict a scene that could happen in any small African village.

Called "The Visitor," the dance depicts the arrival of a distinguished visitor to the village and a feast given in his honor. Fruit and nuts are given to the dancers, and to people in the audience, drawing everyone in the theatre into the scene. The villagers dance for the visitor, and the young women of the village start a friendly competition for his attentions, showing themselves off by dancing. A courtship ritual follows, ending as the visitor chooses a wife from among the village women and a final dance of celebration follows.

Olufunmilayo Jomo, the director of the company, teaches African dance for the Model Cities Cultural Arts Program in Baltimore. She has trained in both African and modern dance and has been performing professionally for the last twelve years in New York, Washington and Baltimore.

The company includes Jamila Amin, Marva Cureton, Mary Brown, Aye Ayanna, Ngina Onyango and David Wilkerson. They are accompanied by drummers Guinea Onyango, Omowale Agun and Ahmed Onyango, who play traditional African drums and other percussion instruments including cow bells, balaphone and shekere (a gourd covered with beads).

All performances at the Theatre Project are free — bring a friend.

Isley Brothers

By Frederick I. Douglas

Can you imagine the Isley Brothers, NEW Birth and the Bar-Kays on the same show! It actually happened this past weekend at the Civic Center. Also featured on this dynamic bill was Leadhead, an up and coming group from D.C. The show was produced by Dimensions Unlimited, the same people that brought the Freedom Festival to D.C.'s RFK Stadium with greats like Mandrill, Buddy Miles, Jimy Castor and the Funkadelics.

When I reached the Civic Center, the show had already started. A few people were milling around outside awaiting an oportune moment to get in the show without paying. All was quiet and peaceful on Baltimore Street. When I got inside, I could hear Leadhead blasting away on one of their uniquely, original jams. They are somewhat like Black Heat, another D.C. group that has a chart climbing record out now. Remaining in the hall until intermission, I was treated to a visual banquet as foxy young back lovelies promenaded through the halls, clad in the latest togs. Some had their hair intricately corn-rowed in imaginative geometric patterns while others wore brightly colored, ornately twirled head wraps. If one looked closely, one could pick up west tribe they might have descended from as you could detect their resemblances to home people like the Watusis, Mandingoes and even a few Pygmys and Hottentots.

The intermission entertainment coming to an end, everyone went back inside to dig on the Bar-Kays. They got off on a few jams like the "Son of Shaft" and other foot stompers that had the rafters shaking. The Bar-Kays have really been doing it in the music world, backing people like Isaac Hayes and other leading proponents of the Memphis Sound. However, they are a truly professional, progressive group that is into a very deep thing. Check out the album "Black Rock," and you will really get an earful. Their sound is an interesting blend of Psychedelic and soul that is guaranteed to insure a funky good time at any get together you might have for the New Year's celebrations.

Then came New Birth. They mostly did things from their new album entitled "It's Been a Long Time," and their first album known as "Birthday." The group is definitely a crowd pleaser. The highlight of their performance was when they did "Gotta Get a Knutt" which had the crowd climaxing to the frenetic beat. People were dancing in the aisles as the security officers tried to cajole them back into their seats. Everybody was really cool and there were no hassles.

And then came the moment everyone had been waiting for. The Isley Brothers came onstage and pandemonium broke out. Whistles screeched and [illegible] surged towards the stage declined in the least.

They'll entertain the Soul Train gang with such songs as, "He's the Father", "Get It Together," Jermaine will be featured singing, "You're In Good Hands Now" and Michael will solo, "With a Child's Heart."

Joe Jackson, father of the renown Jackson 5, will put in a Cameo appearance.

On Soul Train

The Jackson 5 will perform on Soul Train, the nationally popular teen dance show this coming weekend. Don Cornelius is host and executive producer of the television program.

The Jackson 5 are definitely no strangers to the Soul Train gang. Even though Tito and Jermaine are married, the popularity of the Jackson 5 has not de-

Maude (series star Beatrice Arthur, left) invites a teen-ager, played by Broadway actress Tanu, to live with the Findlays for two weeks, and thereby finally meets her match, on "Maude" Tuesday, Jan. 8 (8:00-8:30 PM, EDT) on the CBS Television Network.

New Year's Eve Afoot!

By Vasrti McKenzie

What did you do New Year's Eve It might surprise you that many decided to experiment with the new national past time — Stay At Home!

And it might surprise you that hundreds turned out for two New Year's Eve performances of "Something's Afoot," a happy murder mystery musical currently playing at the American Theater at the L'Enfant Plaza in Washington, D.C.

The play will close out this week after a two month extended stay at the new theater.

Theater goers were treated to champagne before the show and had a chance to rub elbows with director-choreographer Tom Taney and publicist, Flo Herbold.

You can always tell when you're in the presence of stage talent. Everyone can feel their vivacity and excitement for life. I think they're calling it charisma these days.

Well, Mr. Taner has it. His staging of the Agatha Christy inspired spof set in 1935, was perfect.

The mystery and the fact that no one had figured out "Who dunit" yet kept theater goers buzzing.

During the intermission, Mr. Taner gave out door prizes to lucky number holders. I knew if I won anything, it would not be the gift certificate at Lord and Taylor but the strawberry cheese cake. I started off the new year right by not wining anything. However, a surprised young lass of grade school age walked off with two fantastic martin's specially built at a local "In" bar for her parents.

Whether it was midnight or not, guests got more champagne snacks, hats, horns and streamers to go along with the good feeling "Something Afoot" left inside you. The American Theater invited all to a New Year's Eve party and it turned out to be a ball.

By the way, the butler didn't do it.

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