What's Happening

by IDA Peters

"Cinderella Liberty"... a film you'll plunk down bucks to see!

There's a tremendous film in town . . . not downtown . . . but out in the boondocks called "Cinderella Liberty."

It's not doing well . . . due to inept billing and booking. Remember . . . people are driving less and some movies are doing well downtown ("Exorcist").

A story about a second-generation whore (Marsha Mason) who has an 11-year old brown baby from plying her trade on the waterfront (in New Orleans) with sailors of all races . . . is not going to do good business in Dundalk or Glen Burnie.

James Caan plays the sailor, with no education and very little going for him who tries to make an honest woman of the mother and be a father to the boy.

A fine professional performance is turned in by newcomer, Kirk Callaway, no relation to Cab, as the street-wise boy who has learned to fend for himself in all kinds of situations such as when his mother goes on a drunken spree, or is pregnant.

The picture still shows a close family relationship between the mother and boy and how the whole thing is resolved turns out to be a tear-jerker.

It's a shame, so many good pictures are programmed out of downtown theatres . . . convenient to theatre-goers black and white.

PRIDE

Clifton Sanders, a freshman from Baltimore who made the Dean's list for outstanding grades, is president of PRIDE (Promote Racial Identity, Dignity and Equality) the black student organization at Hamline, University in St. Paul, Minn.

Last week they held an art show, evening of dance and poetry and the showing of "Miss Jane Pittman" a videotape of the TV special.

Sanders is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Will R. Branch of Fleming Drive.

SHORT, SHORTS IN THE MAIL

Freddy Cole writes from Atlanta (Vashti McKenzie interviewed him when he was at Apple of Eve at L'Enfant Plaza last New Year's) . . . to say he'll be back this way March 12th opening at Cross Keys Inn in Columbia, Md.

• • •

Donald Johnson, the Bongo player and Business Manager for Franky and the Spindles were a warm-up group for Gladys Knight and the Pips and Kool and the Gang on their recent Civic Center date. They are now in a recording session with Gamble and Huff. Their biggest success, so far, has been "Making Up Time."

The Fine Arts Gallery in the Communications Arts Center at Bowie State College has an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Benny Andrews.

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People do like to come to Baltimore and visit. In April, the AFRO will host 40 parents from Career Development of D.C. Public Schools. They'll visit also Parks Sausage and Lexington Market. D.C. schools are already using our Negro History section and Career Editions.

George Tipton and Lorice Stevens are in concert tonight (Friday) in a show "Passin Through" at the Mechanic Theatre featuring selections from "Godspell," "Purlie," and "Porgy and Bess."

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DARRYL ROBERTSON of Francis St., wants to know more about The Supremes. Yes, Jean Terrell did leave but she's been replaced by Freda Payne's little sister. However, here's a pix of Mary Wilson and her fiance, Pedro at the Roxy Theatre opening in January of the O'Jays.

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BETTY ROSE of Pressman St., heard that Max Julien might come to Baltimore to make a movie. He's in town today (Friday at the Hilton). She says she has two years of dramatics and she wants to talk with him and just look at him.

Suggestion . . . Betty, volunteer to work with Arena Players or many of the active groups looking for talent. That's your best bet.

• • •

THE PICKWICK PLAYERS Equity Children's Theatre Touring Company will present a new musical version of HANSEL AND GRETEL at St. Timothy's Performing Arts Center on Greenspring Avenue on Saturday, Feb. 23rd. The show won the Richmond National Children's Playwriting Competition last season.

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"Five On The Black Hand Side" is rolling up outstanding grosses in key situations following its smash premier engagement in New York City.

As reported by James R. Velde, Senior Vice President of United Artists, the picture grossed more than $41,000 in 5 weeks in D.C. at RKO Keith's and the Republic.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, already scheduled to open an eight-week run of Tom Stoppard's latest play "Jumpers" now playing announced that it also will begin a tour of its own production of Stoppard's "The Real Inspector Hound" on that same day at the New Locust Theatre in Philadelphia.

The center's production of "The Real Inspector Hound," starring Rovert Vaugn, had a highly successful run last summer at the Eisenhower Theater where the American premier of "Jumpers" will take place.

The American Film Institute Theater in the Kennedy Center will present a series of 25 features, Feb. 17-March 16, under the title "Play into Film."

The revue format show is a fast moving collection of over 50 songs and sketches from 23 of Noel Coward's plays.

Mary Wilson of Supremes and her fianee, Pedro, at the O'Jays opening at the Roxy Theatre this past January.

The Gus Solomons Dance Company will be at Theater Project for free performances thru February 25. This modern dance company from New York will also give a master class at University of Maryland Baltimore County.

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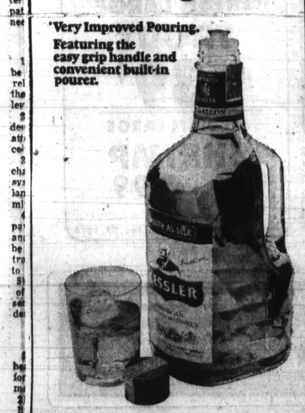

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Black Experience = Arena Players

By Frederick I. Douglass

For more than 30 years the Arnea Players have been presenting theatrical productions of the highest calibre to the Baltimore community. Its first production in 1953 was William Saroyan's "Hello Out There." Since that time the group has performed on many stages including a makeshift arrangement in a building on the campus of Coppin State College, the Druid Hill Branch of the YMCA and Murphy Auditorium, Morgan State College.

In 1962 the group purchased an old building located at 408 Orchard Street with box office receipts and funds which came out of the pockets of members. The building has become their permanent home and has been the scene of memorable performances including hits fresh from Broadway, revivals of classics and offerings from brilliant, but too often obscure young Black playwrights.

Currently the Players are presenting two comedies by Douglas Turner Ward — "Happy Ending" and "Day of Absence." Both plays deal with the symbiotic relationship between the races in America. While both blacks and whites benefit from this relationship, it has historically been lopsided, with whites reaping the greatest rewards by systematically exploiting blacks and by maintaining the machinery of control to prelude a change in the status quo, while the schism between the races has been the sources of reams of vitriolic writings, Ward chooses to explore the humorous side of this situation which began when the first Black man set foot on American soil.

"Happy Ending" is a one-act play which takes place in a delapidated Harlem tenement building. As the play begins, two sisters are weeping because their employers are getting divorced. This greatly distresses their nephew who derides their sympathy for whites, giving them a stern lecture about race issues.

He promptly changes his tune when he is educated as to how the system really works. For years the sisters have been running the household of their employers, cooking, cleaning, paying the bills, balancing the budget and augmenting their meagre wages by padding the bills and appropriating items that were of use to themselves, their mates and, of course, their nephew. The imminent divorce of their employers threatens to destroy this well-oiled system and to bring financial crisis to a ghetto family. As implied in the title, the play ends happily with the employers deciding not to get divorced. A hilarious comedy, "Happy Ending" had the SRO crowd at the Arena Playhouse cracking up at the madcap antics of a black family trying to preserve the endangered marriage of their white employers.

"Day of Absence" is also a satire on the relationship between American blacks and whites. In this play, society is thrown into chaos when all the blacks in a small Southern town disappear for a day. No one knew where they went or how long they would be gone. All that was known was that "the Negras Is gone." The whites in this town were as dependent upon blacks as they were hostile towards them. Blacks performed all of the menial tasks from shining shoes and chopping wood to cleaning house and raising white children.

Although many of the tasks they performed were very simple, most of the white people had no idea of how to do them. The townpeople became panic stricken and pandemonium broke loose. The next day riously as they disappeared and "everything is just as it was." "Isn't it," a white man asks puzzled as the play ends.

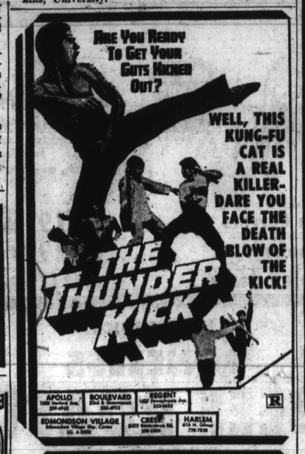
Particularly impressive in "Day of Absence" are Warren W. Street who played the mayor of the town, Darnell Young and Sonny Clash who played Clem and Luke, the old men who sit on the porch everyday and know everything that happens in the town. Their sterling performances are examples of the professionalism of the Arena Players.

While the Sets designed by George Barrick, the directing of Irv Turner and the splendid acting of the cast mesh tightly together to consistently deliver quality entertainment, the entire operation is volunteer and there are no salaried employees or staff members.

Located in the Orchard-Biddle Urban Renewal Area, the Arena Players are currently waging a fund raising campaign to finance mandatory improvements to their building. Hopefully their effort will be a success. Baltimore needs unique community efforts like this wherein teachers, nurses, housewives, factory workers, students and others can do something that brings immense satisfaction to themselves as well as their audience.

Upcoming productions by the Arena Players include "Thunder in the Index," "The Minstrel Boy," "The Everlasting Arm" and "Sugarmouth Sam Don't Dance No More."

The Alvin Ailey City Center Dance Theatre performs "Revelations", one of the dance to be presented in its February 27 performance at Johns Hopkins, University.



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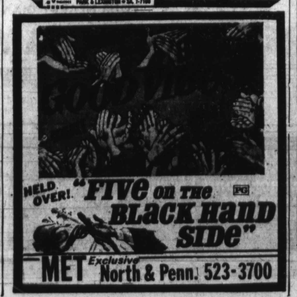

Monumental Music Hall

Ron-Doc Presents New Acts

by Connie E. Brown

The Roc-Don Management Company presented its first annual press party to salute its three major acts; The Softones, First Class, and Changor and Co. at the Club Venus this past Monday Night.

At present the history of the Roc-Don Management Company is a short one, but many in the music industry feel that it will be a long and monumental one.

One July morning in 1971 four young men walked into the office of Rod Armstrong, President and Ernest W. Donaldson Jr., vice president, and immediately began to talk about management, "We need someone to help us become professional entertainers."

With the signing of Elton Lynch, Marvin Brown, Steve Jackson, and Byron Summerville, professionally know as the Softones, the Roc-Don Management Company was born. Roc-Don produced the Softones first single "Any Street" and was instrumental in signing the Softones to Aveo Records, a national label.

Another vocal act, First Class, was signed January 1973 and was first produced by Roc-Don on their first recording "What Is Life." In December of that year First Class was signed with Perception Records and currently have a release "What About Me," which looks as if it will be a big record.

The newest editions to the management roster are Changor and Company, an eight piece band act, soon to release their first single "Y Sharp."

THE SOFTONES

The Softones are one of the most exciting young vocal groups to emerge from the local ranks. Performing with a distinctively professional style all their own, the Softones were received with much fanfare at the press party.

Beginning the show with "Keep On Trucking" and following with such songs as "Never Let A Woman" and their latest "My Dream," the Softones kept the audience spellbound with their soulful spirit and energetic choreography.

Sporting white tails accented with pink and blue plaid with pink shirts, the Softones looked as good as they sounded.

The Softones, having toured with well-known artist such as Curtis Mayfield and the Chillites, have been able to expand their geographical area of demand.

Draped in self-confidence and displaying excellent showmanship the Softones are destined to become one of the front runners on the National scene.

FIRST CLASS

First Class is comprised of four experienced and talented young men from Baltimore known for their smooth and unique singing style and the ability to handle any type of song ranging from Top Ten Rhythm and Blues to Pop.

Singing their latest release "What About Me" First Class, with the assistance of a good band and more exposure, could really become 'first class.'

CHANGOR and CO.

Changor and Co. is a very versatile band capable of backing up a group such as the Softones or performing on their own.

Presenting their newest single (to be released), "Y Sharp," Changor and Co. demonstrated good showmanship and the complete cohesiveness between band and leader.

With better material to work with and more experience Changor and Co. will become a number one band in no time.

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ZION BAPTIST

Talent Ecclesiastes Workshop of the Zion Baptist Church will present Geraldine Barksdale in a concert of Spiritual music, "Gospel in Song," with Fernando G. Allen, pianist and John E. Myers, III, guitarist, on Sunday, Feb. 24, at 4 p.m. The church is located at Caroline and Lanvale Sts.

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MORGAN STATE

The Northeast Baltimore Symphony Society will present the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Darrold Hunt, conducting, at the Carl Murphy Auditorium, Morgan State College on Thursday, Feb. 28 at 8:15 p.m.

The program will include "Overture to the Bartered Bride" by Semtana, Bizet's "L'Arlesienne, Suite No. 2," Britten's "Four Sea Interludes" and "Symphony No. '2' by Schumann.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem will be presented in concert tonight (Friday) at the Lyric. This week, despite the strike, Arthur Mitchell has been working with students at Coppin and Morgan. Above shows him working with young students in his Harlem studio. A performance for students will be held at the Lyric, Saturday at 2:30 p.m.

Enoch Pratt

Saturday, February 23

"Puss In Boots," "The Snowy Day," "Squeak, the Squirrel," "The Story About Ping" and "The Stonecutter," films at the Pratt Library's Pennsylvania Avenue Branch, 12 noon.

"Hollywood's Musical Moods," film at the Central Pratt Library, Wheeler Auditorium, 2:00 p.m.

Sunday, February 24

"Things To Come," film at the Central Pratt Library, Wheeler Auditorium, 2:00 p.m.

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TV Notes

By Cynthia Stevenson

PAUL WINFIELD, Ruby Dee and Lou Gossett will star in the "CBS Theater" special, "It's Good To Be Alive," Friday, Feb. 2 at 9:00.

Paul Winfield portrays the great Brooklyn Dodgers baseball player, Roy Campanella, who was rendered quadraplegic after a tragic accident.

• • •

MELBA MOORE will appear on The Mike Douglas Show Monday, Feb. 25. Melba sings "I Got Cha" and "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother" in her inimitable style. She talks about sighting a U.F.O. from a California beach and her new discovery of "auras" ("Everybody has them. You just can't see them. If we develop our senses about auras, we may be able to detect diseases like cancer before they manifest themselves").

• • •

NEVER BEFORE in his singing career has Johnny Mathis performed on Soul Train since the show went nationwide in 1971. But now, plans have been revealed that "Mr. Wonderful," Johnny Mathis is coming to the hour-long, teen-oriented dance show, February 23.

Others guests on the show include the popular Chicago group, The Dells and George Foreman, Heavyweight Boxing Champion of the world. The Dells sing "I Miss You" and "Give Your Baby A Standing Ovation." Foreman makes a cameo appearance.

Eight complete strangers accept an invitation from an unknown host to spend a week-end at a mysterious castle high in the Austrian Alps in "Ten Little Indians," WBAL-TV's "Sunday Afternoon Show" feature, Sunday, February 24, at 12 Noon-2:30 p.m.

Within a short period of time, all of the visitors realize that they are part of a chilling game of death, as one by one they meet a sudden, and often abrupt, end.

• • •

OSSIE DAVIS and his wife Ruby Dee will star in "Today Is Ours," the fourth presentation in the ongoing series, the "CBS Festival of the Lively Arts for Young People," on Saturday, Feb. 23.

The special features a supporting cast of young black people, whose poeticized passion for life carries the action. Harry Belafonte joins in the special, the script of which is based on "Glowchild," a book of poems concerning the black experience.

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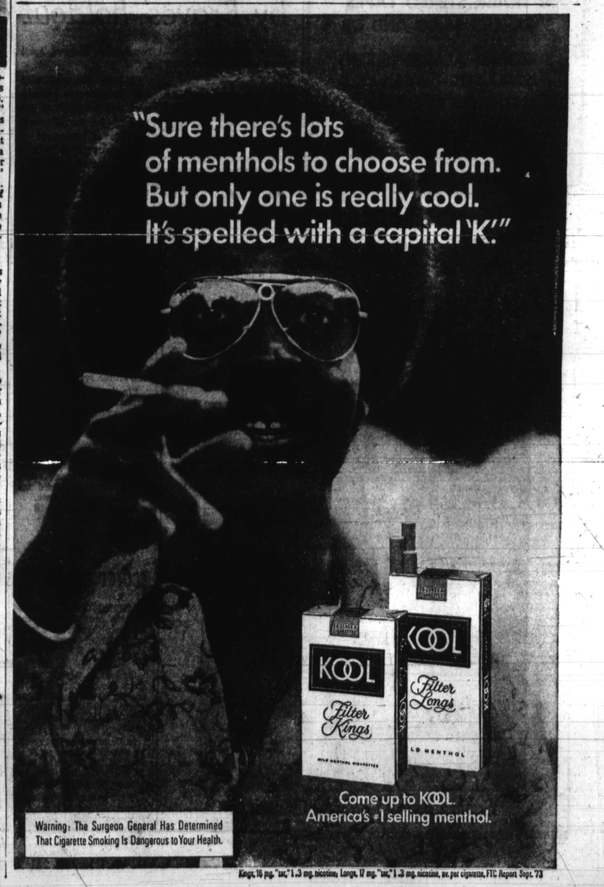
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