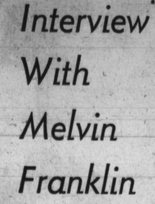
Interview With Melvin Franklin



By Vashti McKenzie

You don't have to see Melvin Franklin to know he's around. he only thing you have to do is keep your ears open and listen.

Franklin relaxed on the dressing table of anempty dressing room leaning against its wall to wall mirror reflecting his excellent taste in the newest fashion rage, denim.

"Singing isn't the only way to establish financial security," said the owner of the deepest velvet voice in the business.

Franklin was speaking about how the emptations were branching out and producing two other groups in the music business. Perhaps you've heard of Swiss Movement or heard their album "Time For Swiss Movtment." If not, perhaps you're familiar with United Sound.

Otis Williams and Franklin are sponsoring Quiet Elegance which has a single out "Will You Be My Man In the Morning."

Individuals in some of Motown's super sound groups have solo albums. the Jackson 5 is a prime example with solo albums out by practically all the brothers.

"We had to get a tight unit going again," said Franklin, noting that a new member had been added. "We had a few problems to work out and we needed to develop a type of cohesive group so that people won't ego trip out."

He talked of the possibility of a mood album coming soon which would feature each of the temps in solo action and perhaps a spiritual album.

"There are many sides of the Temptations that I feel our producers haven't shown yet," he said.

He hinted that the super group might be in the market for a new producer who would utilize all their talents.

The Temptations have been around a long time doing the same kind of sound and making the same kind of movements that everyone tries to imitate.

Would the Temptations like to move on to something new now that they are a little wiser and older?

"We're about to revamp our act," he said. "We have a target date for our face lift set for September."

He promised that the Temps would not change exactly but expand.

"We're always improving," said Franklin, "looking for new things to do ... you know, beat the trend."

The new look will be ready for their appearance in Las Vegas in September.

The Temps have been on the road quite a bit this winter and spring playing clubs and making one night appearances like the Saturday nighter here and the Sunday performance in Newark, N.J.

"We have been traveling around so much, we haven't had a chance to record a new single and we need one now," said Franklin.

"We'll probably release something from the album "1990" and I'm leaning towards some of the Otis numbers."

He noted that "America" would be a different and strong song for now.

Asked if he personally preferred performing in night clubs or the large arenas, he said he didn't mind either that each had their own thing.

"The people make you feel it," he said. "In the one night concerts you make your substantial money. In clubs it's intimate and you don't have to move around all the time."

Speaking of moves, Franklin just movtd from Detroit to Los Angeles in February but really has only been able to spend 12 days in his new home.

The Temptations have also been doing talk and game shows and if any other offers come, "We're ready for it," he said.

"I really don't know about movies," said Franklin; "that means performing in front of cameras. I like to work with people."

The likable Libran was then whisked away by the Temp's valet to do his thing for the people.

Mrs. Celestine Morgan was the studio teacher on "You're A Humpty Dumpty", part of a safety series "Why To Go" which won a first award in national competition for Maryland State Department of Instructional Television. The citation read that "the performances are superior, the writing is imaginative and clear and the structure and pace are well suited to the audience.

What's Happening

by IDA Peters

No, **Max Julien** has not arrived in town yet to make his movie "Goldie." To all you callers ... when he comes ... this column will let you know.

However, **Gary Bartz** was in town Monday to do a concert at Coppin with his Ntu Troop. He's the nephew of Pauline Brooks Amis.

Betty Davis ... she's a wild one in her silver pants ... upset our office with her visit. Also, this week Sussex group, **Master Fleet**, came in to say hello. They were different and proceeded to take our pictures for a change.

This Saturday, stop by **St. James'** Episcopal Church. Their youth group ORGIES is having a Flea Market starting at 8:30 a.m.

Linda Nelson, wife of Michael Nelson, the guitar player with Brute, called to thank Fred Douglass for his review on Brute a while back. Linda says that since the story appeared he has many calls and offers for jobs with national and local groups.

The **Charlie Byrd** Trio will be in concert this Sunday at the Left-Bank Jazz Society at the Famous Ballroom.

Ralph Bakshi, whose animated features have shook up a lot of people, expects to touch off a furor among blacks with **Coonskin** now in the editing stage. The story line, basically, says that blacks are not going to get anywhere in white society so "they may as well get it together among themselves, because that's all they've got."

Thalmus Rasulala, who co-starred in the Emmy-nominated "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," has been signed for the role of an accused killer in MGM's "Ricco," which stars Dean Martin as a San Francisco defense attorney.

Previously at MGM to star in "Cool Breeze" Rasulala this time portrays a young man who after being freed on one murder charge becomes the object of a citywide manhunt after a pair of cop killings.

Sheila Fenderson will be one of the singers in scenes from the opera, **Carmen**, to be presented at the Community College of Baltimore on May 10 and 11.

The opera will be given in the Campus Theatre of the Fine Arts Wing of the college, 2901 Liberty Heights Avenue. Curtain time is 8:15 p.m. The event is open to the public.

Bizet's popular opera about the Spanish bullfighter and his sweetheart will be but one of the performances. The CCB program will include scenes also from Samel-Barber's **A Hand of Bridge**, a modern opera, which will open the program. Following the Barber performance, the group of 60 persons will present scenes and areas of Verdi's **Il Trovatore** and then Bizet's popular Spanish-setting work.

The gala event will be followed at the May 10 performance by a reception for those attending, with proceeds for the CCB Cultural Arts Council, said Miss Deborah London, chairperson of the Cultural Arts Council and assistant to the dean of Community Services Division, Milton A. Dugger.

Singers for the various opera will include Prof. William Milner, Betty Malkus, Dorothy Kendall, all three of CCB; Allan Wittel of Polytechnic Institute and Hugh Harrell III, a student of Prof. Malkus. On stage, too, will be the CCB choir directed by Prof. Milner and members of the Peabody Dance Department, studying under Maria Morales.

Frank Gossage, of the CCB Drama Radio-TV department, directs the production. Prof. Jaap Van Opstal, chairman of the Music Department, is musical director and Eugene Bronstein is technical director.

The Black Women's Focus of Columbia is presenting a **black Arts Festival** on Saturday, May 18, from 1-7 p.m. at Kahler Hall, Joseph Square Shopping Center, Village of Harpers Choice, Columbia.

* * *

SANA (Singles Are Not Alone) are holding a **"Soulful" Membership Rally** to find out where the fun and action is. Do you like to party, swim, bowl, bike ride, skate, attend plays, cultural functions activities that include your children, meet new friends? Then SANA is your thing! You're invited to rally on Sat., May 11, at the Running Brook Neighborhood Center, Columbia, Md. at 6:30 p.m.

Helen Grigal, artistic director of Baltimore Actors' Theatre, has announced two special performances of Rodgers and Hammerstein's **Sound of Music**. These shows will be given in conjunction with the Wixie Children's Musical Theatre and will be presented on Sundays, May 12 and 19 at 2 p.m.in Stephens Hall at Towson State College.

* * *

Roland Park School's 46th Annual May Mart will be held on Saturday, May 11 on the school grounds at 5207 Roland Avenue. Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., rain or shine.

* * *

The first annual Community Art Fair, sponsored by the Metropolitan Ebony Action Department of the YMCA, will be held on May 11, 1974 in the Charles Center Plaza.

* * *

The Theatre Department of Towson State College presents George Bernard Shaw's **Major Barbara**, directed by Dr. C. Richard Gillespie, thru May 11 on the Main Stage of the Fine Arts Building, located at Towson College and Osler Drives. There will be no Monday evening performances.

* * *

Mother's Day gifts will be prominent among the many original arts and crafts which will be exhibited by more than 50 artisans at the **Bolton Hill Art Festival** on Sunday, May 12 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Sponsored by the Mount Royal Improvement Association, the festival will be held in the 1200 block of Bolton Street and in the vicinity of the future Bolton Hill Swim and Tennis Club.

In celebration of the **Baltimore Museum's** birthday, Pimlico Race Course is designating the fifth race on Saturday, May 11 as "the Baltimore Museum of Art's 60th Birthday Race."

Gary Bartz is a hometown brother making it good in the hard cruel world of music.

Bartz stopped by the AFRO to chat about his music and his group, the Ntu Troop which performed Monday night at Coppin State.

His current hit single "I've Known Rivers" catipulted him out of the Jazz class and into contemporary music. "I've Known Rivers and Other Bodies" is the title of Bartz/Ntu Troop's top live album.

He cringes when you call his music "Jazz."

"I found out that people could care less for what you call jazz he said." I really try to bring the two together, soul and jazz also African music, all African music."

He may or may not touch on some rock music but never rock and roll.

"Rock and roll is just while people playing black music," he said.

If he has to label his music, Bartz calls it black folk music.

"It comes from black people and there is no place you can go to learn it, no school," he stated. "It's passed down, word of mouth, that's how I learned."

It seemed like the only thing he ever wanted to do was play the saxaphone. He started on the Alto sax at age 11 and is still going strong 22 years later.

"I use to play at parties when I was in high school here," he reminisced. "Then I used to work at North End Lounge, over on North and Gay," he said.

His father, the late Floyd Bartz owned the noted jazz club. Mrs. Elizabeth Bartz, his mother is still a resident of this city.

When asked if he paid his dues playing the sax in his father's club Bartz replied, "I've paid my dues everywhere."

"Once when I was just starting out, I was stranded in a city after a gig. The band leader just didn't pay us," he said. "It's not uncommon."

But talent prevails.

"I met Max Roach here in Baltimore when he was playing at the Casino," said Bartz. "I played a set and we struck up a friendship."

The Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln group was his first professional association. A few years later he met Miles Davis when he was working in New York at Count Basie's and enjoyed several years working with the "master."

Bartz wanted to write and "do a lot of things on his own, be a leader" so he decided to cut loose and record.

"I just looked in the Yellow pages and got telephone numbers and addresses of record companies who could use my music," he said.

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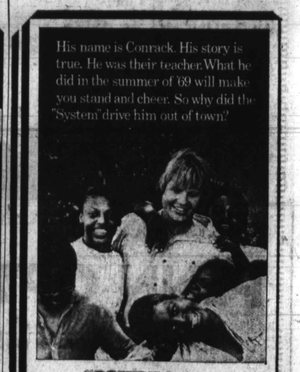
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A joint undertaking of the Towson State College Community Chorus under the direction of Gilbert Brungardt, Sights and Sounds Singers of Columbia under the direction of Angelo Gatto, and the full symphony orchestra of The Maryland Symphonette, Mr. Gatto conducting, will present a performance of Verdi's "Requiem" at the Carl Murphy Auditorium, Morgan State College, Sunday, May 12th at 3:00 p.m.

The one-hundred-and-fifty singers will feature as soloists Soprano Jacqueline Faulcon, Mezzo Betty Malhaus, Tenor David Sheldon and Basso Joseph Eubanks, of Morgan.

• • •

Angelo Gatto

UMES

Carol Jane Buffkins, pianist and harpsichordist, and Barbara Poularikas, violinist, will perform as a duo at the Ella Fitzgerald Center for the Performing Arts, University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, on Saturday, May 11, at 8:15 p.m.

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TONIGHT

The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions and the left Bank Jazz Society will present a free public concert by the U.S. Naval Academy Jazz Band, Friday, May 10 at 8 p.m., at the Medical Institutions' Turner Auditorium, 720 Rutland Avenue.

The band, under the leadership of chief Bud Kowalski, will perform standard and contemporary "big band" jazz works. Vocalist Gayle Slater will alsoperfor m on the program.

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TOWSON

There are several musical events scheduled at Towson State College in the upcoming week.

Sunday, May 12th — TSC Woodwin Ensemble and Clarinet Choir; Fine Arts Concert Hall at 8:15 p.m.

Monday, May 13th — TSC Early Music Ensemble; Fine Arts Concert Hall at 8:15 p.m.

Tuesday, May 14th — TSC Concert Choir; Fine Arts Building Concert Hall.

Wednesday, May 15th — TSC Concert Band; Fine Arts Concert Hall at 8:15 p.m.

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NORTHWESTERN

"The Fantastiks," the longest running show in theatre history, will be performed by the Senior Class of Northwestern High School, 6900 Park Heights, on May 10 and 11 at 8:00 p.m.

The musical features James Spencer, Hammond Briscoe, Joye Locke, Michael Hyde, Lisa Katzenstein, Louis Hurwitz, Tanya Christian, and Michael Davis.

James Frazier, Jr., 34, who in 1971 conducted the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra in the Soviet Union and has been directing the children's concerts of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for many years, has been named Assistant Conductor and Director of the Children's Concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra for the summer season at Robin Hood Dell.

Frazier's debut was with the Detroit Symphony at the age of 24. He is now a teacher in the New York City schools.

His experience and musicianship had led him to work with major American orchestras and in England, Spain and Italy. As a composer he has won numerous music prizes.

Among his compositions are the "King Requiem Mass" premiered by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in memory of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and a rythem and blues musical, "12th Street: A Soul "Opera," which premieres this year.

Frazier was born in Detroit on May 9, 1940, attended public schools there and earned a degree in chemistry from Wayne State University.

He studied piano at the Detroit Conservatory of Music and was awarded a MA in Music from the University of Michigan.

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SOUL SPECTRUM '74

Leslie Taylor, Columbia Records' vice president of Special Markets, has announced the launching of Soul Spectrum '74, the company's largest black album promotion campaign to date.

Soul Spectrum '74, scheduled to run thru May 31st will feature the latest album releases of sixteen recording artists on the Columbia, Epic and Custom labels. The campaign will also include the entire CBS black product catalog.

The releases will feature three album releases on the Columbia label: Earth, Wind and Fire's "Open Our Eyes," Herbie Hancock's crossover smash gold album, "Headhunters;" and Ramsey Lewis', "Solar Wind."

The Philadelphia International label will feature six artists: The O'Jays' platinum-bound "Ship Ahoy" album, Billy Paul's, "War Of The Gods," Bunny Sigler's new album, "That's How Long I've Been Loving You."

The Force Of Nature's new album, "Force Of Nature," M.F.S.B.'s gold album, "Love Is The Message" and Harold Melvin and The Blue Notes', "Black and Blue."

Artists on the Stax label will be: Isaac Hayes' movie soundtrack "Three Tough Guys," Johnnie Taylor's "Super Taylor," The Dramatics', "Dramatically Yours," The Soul Children's, "Friction," Alabert King's newly released "I Want To Be Funky," and Mel and Tim's album simply titled, "Mel and Tim."

SCHOLARSHIPS

The Musician's Association of Metropolitan Baltimore has a scholarship to award to the 16th Annual Congress of Strings, held this year at the California State University, Northridge, from June 24 through August 16, and at the University of Cincinnati, Ohio, from June 24 through August 16, 1974.

Applications may be obtained by calling 301-728-4500, or writing to The Musicians Association Of Metropolitan Baltimore, 847 North Eutaw Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201. Applications must be filed no later than May 15, 1974.

The McKenzie report

Last week, **Red Foxx** and **Demond Wilson**, star and staree of NBC's "Sanford and Son" series were sued by Tandem Productions, Inc. for $10 Million each for failing to show up for rehearsals for the upcoming 1974-75 TV season.

This week, the sly ole Foxx, has decided to do some suing on his own. He has filed for divorce from his wife Betty Jean of 23 years and cited "incompatibility" as the reason.

Foxx also got a temporary restraining order to prevent Mrs. Fox from removing any property from their California home and monies from their various banks accounts.

On the other hand, **Demond Wilson** has a good excuse for not making the rehearsals. He was getting married to Philadelphia model, former **Cicely Louise Johnston** and honeymooning in Lake Tahoe.

There was a quiet civil ceremony in the Los Angeles courthouse with Charlie Weaver of "Hollywood Squares" witnessing.

The new Mrs. Wilson is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Willard Johnston of West Philly, the niece of Dr. Robert L. Poinffexter, deputy superintendent of the Philadelphia School District and first cousin of television newscaster Malcolm Poindexter.

According to Wilson, it was practically love at first sight and the newlyweds will make their home in the Truesdale area of Beverly Hills.

Philadelphia must have a lot on the ball because just six months ago, actor and former football great, **Jim Brown** announced his engagement to Diane Laverne Stanley.

On the afternoon before her closing night at the Riveria Hotel in Las Vegas, **Mary Wilson**, the only remaining member of the original Supremes singing group married handsome **Pedro Ferrer**. Oscar winning Joel Grey was in the wedding party at the "strip" wedding chapel along with good ole Jim Brown.

Brown certainly has been getting around these days. Last weekend in Los Angeles, he was at the 1st anniversary celebration of "Playgirl," a magazine which features among things male nude pull-outs.

The **Miracles**, Motown's oldest and boldest singing group, has been signed to headline at the Mark IV in Washington, D.C. May 21-26.

Bobby Womack has been released from Hollywood Community Hospital in Los Angeles, following a concussion and temporary blindness suffered several weeks ago when he accidentally tripped and fell in a Los Angeles recording studio.

Womack hit it big last year with his scoring of the film, "Accross 110th Street" and has a hit single "Harry Hippie" for which he received a gold record. He has another gold album "Looking for Love" on the charts now.

Curtis Mayfield was the victim of fraudulent radio advertising in the Los Angeles area, when a promoter took out spots on one station to advertise the Curtom Records star's appearance at a tiny, local ballroom.

"Curtis," insisted Stuart, "is past playing such clubs, and when he plays the L.A. area, plays such places as the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium, or some other outstanding facility."

Groucher

An all-Beethoven concert by the Goucher Hopkins Community Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Daniel Abrams, will be presented in Kraushaar Auditorium on Sunday, May 12 at 8 p.m.

This final concert of the season features guest soloist Ann Saslav, performing the Concerto No. 4 in G-major for Piano and Orchestra. The program will also include the Overture to "Prometheus" and Symphony No. 7 in A-major.

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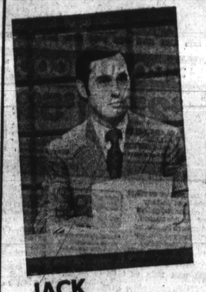
JACK BOWDEN
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