Ashford and Simpson

. . . spectacular

By Frederick I. Douglass

Watching the husband and wife team of Ashford and Simpson perform on Saturday night at the Painters Mill Music Theatre made me feel as though I was a peeping tom spying on two lovers entwined in a passionate embrace.

Ashford and Simpson have the most intense, emotionally charged act that can be seen anywhere on stage. It is immediately obvious that in addition to being songwriters and composers par excellence they are totaly attuned to one another and very much in love.

When they touch one another, you can actually feel the electric charge that is generated by the meeting of their bodies. Ashford and Simpson are—in a word—spectacular!

It is truly gratifying to see Ashford and Simpson performing their own songs on stage and making a big success of it because for the few years they were in the background while their songs made other people famous.

Their track record of hits is incredible and includes golden grooves like "Let's Go Get Stoned" for Ray Charles; "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" and "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing" for Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell; "I Reach Out and Touch (Somebody's Hand)" and "Remember Me" for Diana Ross.

These are just a few of the brilliant creations that have been wrought by the masterful touch of Ashford and Simpson.

The latest things from them can be heard on albums like "Gimme Something Real." "I Wanna Be Selfish" and the phenomenal "Come As You Are" which nearly caused a tropical heat wave during 1976.

The latest and greatest from Ashford and Simpson is on their album "So, So Satisfied," which features a rousing title track and thrillers like "Tried, Tested and True," which the couple performed with zest and verve at Painters Mill.

Ashford and Simpson are truly mind-boggling. The people in the audience were in a groovy mood, totally primed for a fine evening of love songs. Painters Mill was packed to the rafters with beautiful black folks who had come to dig on some super heavy action. The roadies finished setting up the equipment and the lights were turned down low. Ashford and Simpson took their places on the stage.

Soon the theater was filled with sounds that let everyone know that the couple got their start in the church, but that they have been exposed to all aspects of life and love. I have never seen a man and woman so much in touch with one another. Ashford and Simpson are magnetic performers, capable of spellbinding an audience. They have so much spiritual energy and personality and at times their performance gets so fervid and frenetic that it is almost like being at a revival.

They used the whole stage dancing with one another and at times going out into the audience Valerie is a very foxy lady that appealed to the gentlemens' artistic sensibilities and the females in the house appeared to be very much aroused by Nick Ashford.

During the show Ashford and Simpson crooned "Somebody Told A Lie" as well as every cut from their new album, driving the brothers and sisters into a heavy love bag by singing the kind of songs that are painful to listen to if you are alone, but that can serve as a potent aphrodisiac if you are in the company of your main squeeze.

The tour de force of the evening was when Nick and Valarie sang a scorching, sexy version of "So, So Satisfied" during which it seemed as though they were going to go all the way in front of the more than 2,000 people that crammed the concert hall for the first show.

I understand that the midnight show, which didn't get started until nearly 1:00 a.m. and didn't break up until the wee hours of the morning, was just as packed. The only hassle about the show was the monumental traffic jam that confronted people leaving the first show as they ran headlong into traffic coming in for the second show.

Some people tried to play it smart and to leave early only to find that their cars were blocked in by inconsiderate individuals. A friend of mine was concerned with this situation and had to wait nearly and hour to be released from the prison of automobiles. Nevertheless, he found the championship of his date quite satisfactory and they really got a chance to get acquainted during the prolonged wait.

Incidentally, Teddy Pendergrass, formerly of Harold Melvin and the Bluenotes, also appeared on the same show but was anticlimactic compared to Ashford and Simpson.

Roberts Hooks and Brenda Vaccaro try to escape a wall of water in the air adventure "Airport 77".

Easter watching on TV

Friday: Redd Foxx and Demond Wilson on "Sanford and Son" April 8, at 8 p.m., EST on NBC-TV.

John Amos on "Future Cop" April 8, at 9 p.m., EST on ABC-TV.

"Here Comes Peter Cottontail," a lighthearted animated special, told and sung by Danny Kaye, will be rebroadcast April 8 (8:00 - 9:00 P.M. on CBS.

Saturday: Bernie Hamilton and Antonio Fargus on "Starsky and Hutch" April 9, at 9 p.m., EST on ABC-TV.

Georgia State Senator Julian Bond becomes the third non-entertainment figure to host "NBC's Saturday Night" when he headlines the April 9 edition of the live comedy-variety series (11:30 p.m.-1 a.m. NYT) on the NBC Television Network.

Bond will join the show's repertory company the NOT Ready for Prime Time Players — Dan Aykroyd, John Belushi, Jane Curtin, Garrett Morris, Bill Murray, Laraine Newman and Gilda Radner.

Brick, a group from Atlanta, will be the musical guests.

* * *

Sunday: Redd Foxx on "The American Sportsman" April 10, at 1:30 p.m. EST on ABC-TV.

Tony Brown, host, "Black Journal" April 10. Check local listing for station and time.

The 350-voice Fredonia Festival Chorus, soloists, and the Fredonia College Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of noted conductor, Harry John Brown, will present George Frederick Handel's magnificent oratorio, "Messiah" in its entirety. This 2½-hour presentation, produced in December, 1976, originated from the New Rockefeller Arts Center, Fredonia College Music School at the State University of New York.

"Messiah" will air Easter Sunday, April 10 at 2:00 p.m. on stations of the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting — TV 22, 28, 31, and 67.

"Job Discrimination: Doing Something About It," a guide to combating discrimination in employment, will be the premiere broadcast on the weekly five-part "Woman Alive" series of specials beginning Sunday, April 10 at 10:00 p.m. on stations of the Maryland Center for Public Broadcasting — TV 22, 28, 31, and 67.

Monday: Isabel Sanford and Sherman Hemsley on "The Jeffersons," April 11, at 8 p.m. est on CBS-TV

Ralph Wilcox on "Busting Loose," April 11, at 8:30 p.m. EST CBS-TV.

Beverly Sills and Steve Lawrence will host "The Television Critics Circle Awards," a live, two-hour, entertainment - variety awards special, honoring outstanding achievement in television as selected by American television critics, to be broadcast Monday, April 11 (9:00 11:00 P.M., ET) on the CBS Television Network.

Complementing Miss Sills and Lawrence, by adding their talents to the evening's entertainment as either performers or award presenters, will be Ann-Margaret, Ken Berry, Dinah Carroll, Sandy Duncan, Harvey Korman, Linda Lavin, Jean Marsh, Mary Tyler Moore, Lou Rawls, Shields and Yarnell, and Ben Vereen.

Abby Mann, the Academy Award - winning writer, has written the screenplay and will be the director as well as executive producer of "King: the four-hour NBC World Premiere movie based on the adult life of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." was announced today by John J. McMahon, Vice President, Programs, West Coast, NBC Television Network.

Production on the film will start in June, with presentation planned for two successive nights during the 1977-78 television season. Casting will be announced shortly.

Top R&B Albums

1 ASK RUFUS — Rufus Featuring Chaka Khan
2 UNMISTAKABLE — Natalie Cole
3 ...AHH, THE NAME IS BOOTSY, BABY — Bootsy's Rubber Band
4 SONS IN THE KEY OF LIFE — Stevie Wonder
5 IN FLIGHT — George Benson

Dizzy Gillespie at Civic Center

One of America's great jazz institutions returns to Baltimore on Friday, April 15 when "Friday Night Sounds" presents Dizzy Gillespie in concert at the Baltimore Civic Center

John Birks 'Dizzy' Gillespie will take to the stage at 8 p.m. and demonstrate why music experts consider him "the greatest living jazz trumpet player and one of the most important figures in the history of jazz."

His beginnings as a soloist with big bands led by Earl Hines and Cab Calloway framed a career of profound influence on American music for more than 30 years. As an innovator, Dizzy was responsible for the transition from the swing to the more progressive style of jazz.

Though some young jazz fans may try to fluff Dizzy Gillespie off as nothing more than an important item in the jazz hall of fame, he is far from being a ghost of the past. Dizzy continues to mesmerize his audiences around the world, not only as a trumpet virtuoso, but as a splendid comedian, fine blues singer and master of the congo drum. He is a rare artist who commands the respect of the musical world.

Dizzy Gillespie's Baltimore appearance will be staged in the Civic Center Mimi Concert Hall, sharing the bill with Maryland's own Charlie Byrd on April 15.

"Friday Night Sounds" comes to an exciting finale on May 13 with Maynard Ferguson in concert.

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Mabel King is mama on 'What's Happening'

By Vashti Mckenzie

Mabel King, who stars as Mama in the TV show "What's Happening" is the same off-screen as on — a pleasant but determined woman whose vocal range varies from the purr of a kitten to the sound of an enraged lioness.

Born in Charleston, S.C., on Dec. 25, Mabel is the daughter of Mrs. Rose Washington, now of New York City, and of the late Edward Washington. She and her family moved to New York City when she was only two months old, and she was educated in public schools in The Bronx.

To help her mother with family finances, Mabel started working when she was 12 years old. During the day, she would attend school; during the evening she worked sorting vegetables in a canning factory. Her favorite non-show business job was putting rhinestones and pearls on shoes and blouses in a Manhattan factory. "Since it was on a piecework basis, and my friends and I were fast, we were able to get through it in the early afternoon and go to the movies and still make more than a college-educated secretary who worked in the plant," she recalls with a laugh.

Her show business career could be said to have begun at the age of four, when her mother, a member of the choir at Friendship Baptist Church in Manhattan, used to bring her to choir practice with her. Mabel learned from experience and later sang with a gospel group, The Sincere Four. From there, she went on to sing in nightclubs and theatres and with many rock groups.

"I drifted into the theater," she explains, "doing mainly off-off-very-off Broadway." Her big break came with the role of Maria in the national tour of "Porgy and Bess" in 1966. Then she played Ernestine Money in "Hello Dolly!" with Pearl Bailey. That show lasted two years on Broadway.

She has also starred in Melvin Van Peebles' "Don't Play Us Cheap" on Broadway and starred in movies, including "Blood Couple" and "The Slingo Long Traveling All-Stars and Motor Kings." She scored a major triumph as the Wicked Witch of the West in "The Wiz" on Broadway. She is also very proud of having been able to learn French quickly by the phonetic method so she could star in the French classic, "La Dispute," in Paris, where it was put on by The Theatre Nationale Populaire (National Theater of France).

MABEL KING

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leaves you breathless.

Bernie Casey, on AFRO home office visit to promote movie "Brothers" poses with Mesdames Frances Cunion, Terether Bundy, Kirk Day Care Center; Diane Johnson, Southwestern Mental Health, Spring Grove Day Center; Julia Boone, School 181, Region Seven; and Garcenia Lewis, Kirk Day Care Center.

Youngsters from Kirk Day Care Center were thrilled with visit of actor-artist-star Bernie Casey when he visited AFRO during their Newspaper In The Classroom tour. Casey also visited Dunbar High and the Hippodrome and Rotunda movies. Above: Craig Sribner, Raquel Wells, Lewis Davenporte, Erika Leonard, Deanna Carter, Christ Murry, Ventura Davis, Angelique Nelson, Charles Nelson, Derrick Willoughbly, Anthony Mann, Andre Mann, Christina Sribner, Tracy Holden, Darlene Davis, Pam Murray, Cherly Scribner; teachers, Terether Bundy Garcenia Lewis and Frances Cunion Also, School No. 181 Region VII, Jenaya Lynn Jones, Lorraine Johnson, Swandie Inez Boone, Byrant Norris and teacher Julia Boone.

'Same Time, Next Year' . . . rare jewel of a play

By Ida Peters

Good theatre should be entertaining. Most theatre is boring and usually when a show plays the Mechanic it needs work or is on its way to Broadway and is just not ready.

Barbara Rush and Tom Troupe are starring in a rare jewel of a play, Bernard Slade's new comedy "Same Time, Next Year".

It's a good down-to-earth comedy. The actors know their lines and each other so well, they are a joy to watch.

It's the kind of play where you can go into the theatre, leave your cares, have some good belly laughs and come out of the theatre relaxed. There's no strain here trying to figure out the plot or even what the author intends. You don't have to take a full brain. Take my word for it.

Opening nights at the Mechanic this winter have invariably been cold and rainy. Such was the case this past Monday. Nevertheless, downstairs was packed even though spaces were visible in the balcony.

For a change this Baltimore audiece was relaxed, chuckled, belly laughed and had a good time.

I don't usually laugh out loud in theatres usually confining myself to grunts. At some points in this play, laughed so hard, had tears rolling down my cheeks.

I wish I knew the name of the pretty brown lady sitting behind me. He laughter was tinkling and sustained. It was a pleasure to hear her.

The play had only two characters, (George), Tom Troupe, a married man with three children from New Jersey who is in Northern California to do the books of a boyhood friend.

Barbara Rush is Doris an addleheaded lightweight who is also married with three children and is on her way to a Catholic retreat. In case you don't know what this means, in the Catholic religion there are places in the country maintained by the religious order where persons go yearly to meditate and renew their vows and pray with the fathers and nuns.

Doris and George pick each other up in a restaurant and spend the weekend in amorous adventures which are to last from February 1951 for 25 years...the same place, every year.

* * *

They establish a ritual exchange of the good and bad things about their spouses and pictures, their three children as a means of bridging the gaps between the years. The scenes are set every five years and recorded music of each era with highlights of speeches of famous figures, also helps bridge the gaps.

In the '50's you hear Sinatra and in later years the Beatles. In the '60's the voices of Kennedy and Martin Luther King and then later Nixon and Goldwater.

In the beginning, they both feel guilty. He berates her clamness with the line "women adjust to rotteness quickly".

It's really funny to see his change in clothes his gradual greying as he changes from accountant, successful business man to teacher. He goes from boxer shorts to jockey shorts, from youth to impotence to the death of a son in Viet Nam to the death of his wife.

She goes from a high school drop-out, to a college graduate to a sophisticated owner of restaurants steadily building a new vocaulary and image during the 25 years.

Her quipss on her college days are precious as she remarks she's the "only one in the class with clear skin".

On his impotency, she tells him that since he's an accountant she thought the brain would be the first to go.

I think in these times, we can all use a little genuine laughter. Go see "Same Time, Next Year".

And, you can tell from the loudest laughter who's been doing what.

More . . .

Despite demands of terrorists in Washington, D.C., and picketing by some Moslem groups, "Muhammad, Messenger of God" is prospering in the U.S. cities where it's being shown and ranks No. 10 the latest list of "50 Top-Grossing Films" after only two weeks on the charts.

* * *

The Livingstone College Concert Choir will be heard in Hempstead, N.Y. on Sunday, April 17, under the sponsorship of the Jackson Memorial AME Zion Church and Brooklyn, Queens Long Island Chapter of the Livingstone College Alumni Association.

* * *

There will be a TV sequel to "Roots," a 12-hour sequal scheduled for 1979 that will pick up where the first adaptation left off in Tennessee, where the freed slave family moved. The with Alex Haley's own search for his heritage in the Deep South and in The Gambia which led him to write the book.

Broadway is still alive with "Bubbling Brown Sugar," "For Colored Girls," "Wiz," and "Your Arms Too Short To Box With God." Plus "The Great MacDaddy" presented by the Negro Ensemble at the Theatre De Lys. Touring shows offer as much for those who can't make it to NYC. "Bubbling Brown Sugar" is in LA, "Me and Bessie" in St. Louis, "Porgy / Bess" in Boston, "Raisn" in several California cities, and "The Wiz" in Chicago.

Johnny Mathis reportedly spread his magic over South Africa and impressed an interviewer on insisting on trying out various South African dishes. "He bought the ingredients himself and made dinner in his hotel room. After all, he is a gourmet of international repute," writes Peter Feldman in the Johannesburg star.

Patience Valentine, who is quite a singer and actress, and is currently playing a heavy role with the Chicago production of "The Wiz," is the wife of Barry White's new musical director and conductor, John Roberts.

'Black Sunday' is terrifying

Robert Evans the young successful chief of worldwide production for Paramount Pictures was in town to promote "Black Sunday". His credits include "The Godfather", "Godfather II", "Lady Sings The Blues", "Murder Onn The Orient Express".

Over lunch of Henry Gladdings new Chamborg R[illegible] he told us about how he made this truly chilling $8. million dollar movie.

It's about the Black September terrorist group who engineered the attack on the Israelis at the Olympic Games in Munich.

Evans says that in filming "Black Sunday" he used 11 cameras to record the action at the tenth annual Super Bowl Game in Florida and the actual "Goodyear" blimp as the authentic monster.

ROBERT EVANS

Goodyear has not been too happy after seeing the actual film. The eleven cameras set almost in the huddle make the football games sound even more brutal than hockey looks.

Robert Shaw plays an expert Israeli commando, disillusioned with g.im joe but galvinized into trying to prevent a major holocaust.

Bruce Dern should win an Oscar for his portrayal of a deranged, anguished Vietnam vet an ace pilot and talented engineer seeking rengoance in a clever plot to assassinate 80,000 spectators at the Super Bowl, including the President of the United States.

He invents an explosive device that when exploded over the Super Bowl will shoot tiny darts and kill everybody in the stadium. His cold blooded testing of the device while having a man stand as if to have his picture taken is re remolting. This sence was not necessary to the entire film. Sensationalism and shock for no purpose.

Marthe Keller who made her debut in "Marthan Man" is the beautiful Black September terrorist who masterminds the monstrous guerilla attack using her bodily charms to keep the the mad Bruce Dern in check.

The action traces these firmly fleecely determined mad people from Lebanon to football mad Maimi; from a prison cell in Vietnam to the Black September hideout in Beirut; explosive smuggling in Long Beach Harbor; sedret meetings in Washington, D.C.; the suburban viper's nest of warped lovers in Los Angeles; the mamouth operations of the Goodyear blimp base and finally into the football grandstand at the Miami Bowl game.

"Black Sunday" is truly terrifying with frightening suspense which make you wonder was this $8. million dollar expense necessary?

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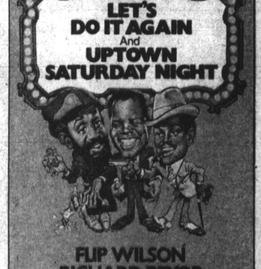

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