Richard Dreyfuss and Melinda Dillon as Roy Neary looks up into near-blinding lights from an unidentified flying object in "Close Encounters of the Third Kind."

UFO's the controversial phenomenon

"It was shortly after dark and ten or twelve men all watched it. It seemed to move toward us, then partially away, then return, then depart. It was bluish . . . then reddish . . . luminous, not solid."

— Jimmy Carter, President of the United States, from his official UFO report submitted when he was Governor of Georgia.

"Intelligent beings from other planets regularly visit our world in an effort to enter into contact with us . . . NASA and the American government know this and possess a great deal of evidence. Nevertheless, they remain silent in order not to alarm people . . . I am dedicated to forcing the authorities to end their silence."

— Gordon Cooper, astronaut, at a UFO conference in New York.

These are among the comments, pro and con, which have fueled one of the most intriguing controversies of our time. It is estimated that more than 15 million Americans believe they have seen Unidentified Flying Objects. Of these "glowing discs," "shimmering lights" or "pulsating spheres," did any originate outside our own solar system? Do they represent attempts by intelligent beings to observe or contact us?

To some experts, like astronomer J. Allen Hynek, solving the mystery of UFO phenomena will lead to a "quantum jump" in our scientific knowledge. To others, such as aviation editor Phillip Klass, there is a "prosaic, terrestrial" answer for every UFO sighting, however bizarre.

The release of the motion picture, "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," should deepen the controversy. Produced by Julia Phillips and Michael Phillips and written and directed by Steven Spielberg, the film eschews the sci-fi trappings moviemakers have relied on since Georges Melies fired a plywood rocket at a cardboard moon in the early silent era.

Instead, Spielberg rooted his imagery in an awesome body of scientific data, which has been growing daily, ever since "mystery airships" were first "sighted" in the skies over Europe during the late nineteenth century. (These "sightings" were first dismissed as hallucinatory hysteria. But as one investigator later pointed out, "scientific knowledge of powered flight in 1896 and 1897 could not have led to the invention of airships with the characteristics the witnesses described.")

Spielberg's guide, as he immersed himself in three decades of UFO detection, was the distinguished astronomer, Dr. J. Allen. Hynek, former director of Ohio State University's McMillin Observatory.

In 1948, Hynek became the nation's leading UFO sleuth when he was retained by the Air Force to head Project Blue Book, a continuing study of UFO phenomena.

Hynek admits he began the project as a skeptic. Twenty years later, after investigating 12,600 reported sightings, he felt that only the outer shell of a scientific breakthrough had been probed.

"About 95 per cent of UFOs turn out to be IFOs — Identified Flying Objects such as advertising planes, Venus, or weather balloons," he later stated. It was the official attempts to dismiss the remaining 5 per cent as hoaxes and hallucinations which disturbed him.

"How can hallucinations appear on radar, break tree branches and scare animals?" he asked. "How can they leave physical traces or stop cars? We're dealing with something far more complex than hallucinations or apparitions."

Sylvester Campbell: The prince in 'The Nutcracker'

By Ida Peters

This year, 1977 is THE year for Sylvester Campbell, internationally known ballet dancer with the Maryland Ballet.

Amid the hustle and bustle of a dress rehearsal at the Maryland Ballet's office on St. Paul Street, Sylvester posed for pictures and talked to the AFRO.

In white rehearsal tights that showed off every muscle of his lean, hard dancer's body he told the AFRO about his latest triumphs.

This past Tuesday, he demonstrated another facet of his multi-talented career by choreographing for twelve young dancers of the Peabody Dance Department the "Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra." This premiere performance with the Peabody Symphony Orchestra received prolonged applause and cheers from the audience.

The Wednesday of our interview, Sylvester was quite elated as we talked about his role as the Prince when the Maryland Ballet presents the classical ballet, "The Nutcracker," at the New Mechanic Theatre, Dec. 20 through 31. Camille Izard, his partner, will dance the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Matinees for school children will be held at the Lyric from Dec. 12-13.

To mount this production around principal dancer Sylvester Campbell and Camille Izard, the Maryland Ballet has called on company dancers, students and children from the Maryland Ballet Center and local dance studios.

Earlier this year Sylvester Campbell won a bronze medal and best partner award at the 1977 Moscow International Ballet Competition. He danced with Camilla Izard of the Maryland Ballet who won an award for artistic excellence. He also danced with a Japanese ballerina, Yoko Ichino. She won a bronze medal.

In previous ballet competitions in Bulgaria and the Bolshoi Theatre in Russia he won a best partner when he danced with Saundra Fortune, a black ballerina from D.C. He won best partner and two diplomas of honor with Dutch ballerina, Olga de Haas.

Before coming to Maryland, Campbell was associate director and leading dancer of the Capitol Ballet and also former principal dancer of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in Canada. Before that he was premiere danseur of the Dutch National Ballet in Holland.

When Campbell and Camilla Izard returned from their triumphant visit to Russia, 10,000 persons turned out to greet them this summer at "On Stage Downtown" at the Hopkins Plaza.

Asked about his plans for 1978, he and Miss Izard have been invited to Japan at the end of February for an International Ballet Competition. They will dance one modern and four classical Pas de Deux. Later in March, they will give a gala performance in Belgium.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Linwood M. Clark of Washington, D.C., he has two sisters who are professional dancers, Lois and Sylvia Campbell.

He says he grew up in the Hanover Street area and got into dance through his love of making puppets and marionettes and performing in his back yard.

He is a product of the Jones-Hayward School of Ballet in D.C. and still works with them.

Sylvester Campbell in "Nutcracker," Dec. 20-31 at the Mechanic. Student highlights — The Lyric, Dec. 12-13.

Average White Band cancels

By Ida Peters

Atlantic Record stars, Average White Band have cancelled their Sunday date at the Baltimore Civic Center. A terse statement from Joe Fuguet, assistant for promotion of the Baltimore Civic Center, said the concert was postponed because AWB had cancelled their 14-city tour.

Atlantic Records in N.Y. who have been sending glowing reviews about AWB's three gold and platinum records and their new album with Ben E. King "Benny And Us."

Simo Doe confirmed by telephone that the AWB concert has been postponed. This leaves Brick and Mandrill out in the cold.

The AFRO recalls this is the third concert postponed at the Baltimore Civic Center in the last few months. The Al Green concert was booked and the promoter failed to post a deposit, according to Civic Center management.

The Funkadelics concert was cancelled with no reason given the AFRO last month. Question: Is B-More a bad concert town?

ENJOY

Friends of the Maryland League of Women's Clubs are calling all member clubs and friends to a "Lunch Is Served" Saturday, Dec. 10 at the Sharp Street United Methodist Church at 11:30 a.m. Call 624-0977 or 594-1172.

Tonight (Friday) the Baltimore Marketing Association dinner at the Hilton at 6:30 p.m. Also Sunday at 4 p.m. dedication of the Herbert Frisby Lecture Hall at the Afro-American Study Center, 12 W. Madison St., by Gov. Blair Lee and the Maryland Commission along with the Herbert Frisby Historical Society.

We'll be talking with Deniece Williams, "This Is Niecy" next week. She comes to town with Earth Wind and Fire, Dec. 28. Phillipe Wynn called to say he's hanging in there and will be at the Hollywood Palace December 25.

Monday, December 12 Center Stage Hands will blend theatre, fashion music and dance at Center Stage at 7:30 p.m.

Coming up December 17-18 at Dunbar High, a Bill Myers original production "Scrooge of Charm City"

Morgan State University's choir's "Annual Christmas Concert" is Sunday, Dec. 11 at 8:15 p.m. with members of the Baltimore Symphony. Concert is free at Carl Murphy Auditorium on campus. Director Nathan Carter has prepared a splendid program of Pinkham's "Christmas Cantata;" Gianninu's "Canticle of Christmas" and spirituals.

Sigmund Romberg's "Student Prince" is being presented by the Hadley Square Singers at Le Clerc Hall, College of Notre Dame Dec. 9-11 at 8 p.m.

"Christmas at the Lyric," the free City-County holiday season concert, that proved so popular in 1975 and 1976, will be presented this year on Wednesday, Dec. 21, at the Lyric Theatre, beginning at 8:00 p.m.

The concert will feature the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra conducted by William Henry Curry, Soprano Jeannette Walters, Mezzo-Soprano Nancy Kelso, Tenor Ted Randall, Bass Duncan Sells, and a combined chorus of students from Baltimore City and Baltimore County High Schools.

Rheda Becker will narrate the program, which includes musical sleigh rides by Mozart and Anderson, excerpts from Bach's "Christmas Oratorio," Bizet's "March of the Three Kings," "Mary, Mary, Where is Your Baby" sung a capella by the chorus, and a Carol Sing-Along which the audience will be invited to join in.

The Peabody Jazz Ensemble will present a concert of big band jazz music on Friday, Dec. 9 at 8:00 p.m. in the Peabody Concert Hall, 1 East Mount Vernon Place.

'Telefon' spy thriller

MGM's "Telefon," a contemporary spy thriller starring Charles Bronson and Lee Remick, will open December 16 in six Baltimore area theatres.

Also starring in "Telefon" are Patrick Magee, Tyne Daly, Alan Badel and Donald Pleasence.

In the film, directed by Don Siegel, the phone is the key which will unleash a program of destruction across the United States. Donald Pleasence is the unhinged, hard - line villian who wants to make the calls; Charles Bronson and Lee Remick are the agents out to stop him. The film takes them on a furious chase from the Kremlin in Moscow to a roadside bar and grill in the backwaters of Texas.

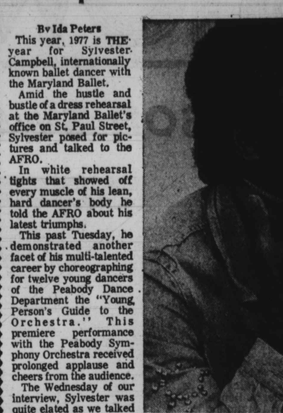
Director Siegel, whose recent films include "Dirty Harry" and "The Shootist," filmed "Telefon" on locations such as Helsinki, Finland, Montana and San Francisco.

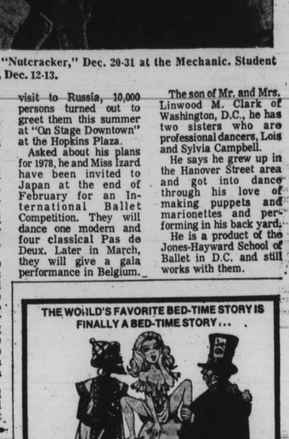
Top R. and B. albums

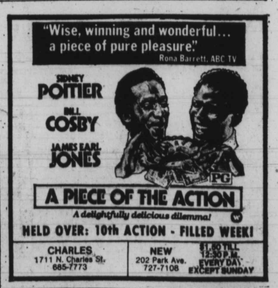
1. Reach For It — George Duke
2. Feels So Good — Chuck Mangione
3. Heads — Bob James
4. Ruby, Ruby — Gato Barbieri
5. Quintet — VSOP
6. Action — Blackbyrds
7. Enigmatic Ocean — Jean-Luc Ponty
8. New Vintage — Maynard Ferguson
9. Blow It Out — Tom Scott
10. Nightwings — Stanley Turrentine

Top jazz albums

1. All In All — Earth, Wind & Fire
2. Live! — The Commodores
3. In Full Bloom — Rose Royce
4. Reach For It — George Duke
5. Feelin' Bitchy — Millie Jackson
6. Baby It's Me — Diana Ross
7. Odyssey
8. Come Go With Us — Pockets
9. Menagerie — Bill Withers
10. Action — The Blackbyrds







Eloise and Linda in D.C.

By Vashti McKenzie

Last night (Thursday) at the Watergate Hotel in Dee Cee, ABC Records held a press party in honor of Eloise Laws, her new album "Eloise" and Linda Creed her producer. They will be making stops at media in Baltimore and Washington.

Eloise is the sister of jazz performers Hubert and Ronnie Laws and performed on the Playboy Club circuit.

Linda Creed has produced hits for the Stylistics, the Spinners, Dionne Warwick, Ronnie Dyson and wrote "The Greatest" for George Benson.

This album marks the unique occasion of one female producing another.

Throughout the history of popular music, a long line of female performers have found immense success. But more often than not, males — in producer and executive roles — have figured prominently behind the scenes.

Now, however, comes a significant album by the stirring pop and soul songstress, Eloise Laws. The album, titled "Eloise," is the complete work of Laws and her producer, Linda Creed (who also wrote several of the selections). It marks the unique occasion of two females entering the studio and coming out with something artistically productive and commercially viable.

"We hope it shakes people up," both women agree, referring to most people's conceptions of status quo musical roles. The pair, though, is quick to point out that "Eloise" isn't a celebration of women's liberation. "We're not out to burn any bridges or bras," says Linda. "We simply set out to make a very positive musical statement."

That they have done. "Eloise" is alive with bright, bouncy R & B-tinged pop, balanced by soulful, soft ballads. The LP shows the singer's smooth yet gutsy grasp on a wide range of musical styles, and the producer's ability to frame those sounds slickly yet loosely.

Compatible instrumental support is provided by a capable rhythm section and alternately by the Love Unlimited, Diana Ross, and "Philadelphia Freedom" orchestras. But throughout, it is Eloise's vocal individuality and the unique overall production that stand out.

Eloise studied on a scholarship at Texas Southern University, and later a fellowship to study music under the guidance of the Corinthian Broadcasting Company in New York.

In New York, Eloise auditioned at the Improvisation, the renowned showcase for new talent. She was selected to perform on the Playboy Club circuit, which led to national television appearances on the Mike Douglas, Merv Griffen, David Frost, and Tonight shows.

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...and all that Jazz

By Bob Matthews

It was a team of old favorites at the Left Bank Jazz Society's Sunday afternoon bash this week, as Don Patterson and Richie Cole held forth.

BOTH have played in and around the Baltimore area for many years, and both have done the bulk of their gigs in smoky nightclubs — and it showed.

Without a doubt, Richie is one of the finest young alto sax men to come on the scene in quite a while. It seemed obvious that he patterned his style after Phil Woods, with a few overtones of Cannonball, but this is all to his favor.

When he took off on a protracted solo, he simply overpowered the accompaniment.

And well he did.

Couldn't figure out just what was wrong with the overall sound of the quartet, until it finally dawned that the fault lay with the drummer.

His name is Bernard Sweetney, and he is indeed a brilliant drummer, a soloist par excellence, with fast hands and even faster wrist action, and therein lay the flaw.

Instead of driving the group, sticking mainly to a basic, identifiable beat, Sweetney played rhythm as a solo, rather than as an accompaniment. At first, it was merely distracting, but it forced both Don and Richie to work extra to produce a full-textured sound.

It was obvious that Don and Richie have played together a great deal. During a rendition of "Broadway" Richie changed tempos in midstream (so to speak) and began playing in two fourth, then six eighths time.

All the while, Don kept it at a four quarter pace. The resultant counterpoint was rhythmically interesting and innovative for jazz.

Don Patterson playing organ, evokes memories of the "good old days" in Atlantic City, where Wild Bill Davis held forth at "The Little Belmont!" while Bill Doggett did his thing across the street at the front bar of "The Club Harlem."

Guess there should be a category in jazz called "nightclub swing" and if so, then Patterson has it. It's a driving beat, with a simple uncluttered bass pedal line.

Two manuals are played, with the right hand punctuating with staccato chords in a repetitious pattern.

And — it all swings.

Vic Juris was on guitar. He has appeared at LBJS many times and is a perfect backup instrumentalist.

He has one of the keenest ears around, and in the "head" arrangements necessary with pickup groups, did his bit to keep the rhythm in place.

As a soloist, Vic is adequate, but not spectacular. His greatest strength lies in his musicianship and ability to blend in with whatever group he happens to be playing with.

Have said before that the only advantage of "jam sessions" is that familiar standards must be played. And this concert was in that mold.

Next week: Carlos Garnett and his Cosmos Force, featuring Ayodele Jenkins. Am anxious to hear this group, for I haven't the faintest notion how they sound. But — I trust the LBJS.

... and now a word

By Jesse H. Walker

NEW YORK

The National Black Network blames the continuing strike of its employees on an attempt by the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians Union to destroy the smallest and only black-owned and operated network. The union is asking for a contract unlike those agreed upon by the major networks, NBN charges.

Geoffrey Holder has begun rehearsals for "Timbuktu," directing and choreographing this new Broadway musical starring William Marshall, Ertha Kitt, Melba Moore and Gilbert Price and scheduled to open at the Mark Hellinger Theatre in mid-February. Out of town playdates include Philadelphia's Shubert, Dec. 16-31 and Washington, D.C.'s Opera House of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Jan. 6 to Feb. 5.

"Baby, I'm Back," the TV comedy pilot starring Demond Wilson (of "Sanford and Son) and Denise Nicholas will become a CBS-TV series, starting Jan. 7. It has a commitment for 13 shows. Show appeared on Saturday, Oct. 28. It's a half - hour sitcom about a father who left his wife seven years earlier and returns on the day she's to be married to another man

Weekend TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson

FRIDAY

Wolfman Jack: Johnny Rivers, Abba and the Shirelles are the guests tonight. 7:30-8:00 p.m.-Channel 7.

Evening Magazine: A visit with Barry Polisar, a writer and performer of children's songs; a recipe for a homemade Christmas gift. 7:30-8:00 p.m.-Channel 13.

Cleo Laine: Jazz vocalist Cleo Laine performs in concert; she sings "Send In the Clowns." 8:00-9:00 p.m.-Channel 2.

CPO Sharkey: Sharkey sees stars in his future when a Hollywood producer casts him as the lead in a Navy training film. 8:00-8:30 p.m.-NBC.

Year Without Santa Claus: This fantasy revolving around Santa's disenchantment over the lack of holiday spirit. 8:00-9:00 p.m.-ABC.

Young People's Special: Hans Christian Andersen's classic tale of Christmas pathos is brought into urban America of the 1970s. 8:00-8:30 p.m.-Channel 11.

Chico and the Man: 8:30-9:00 p.m.-Channel 11.

Midnight Special: Host is Wolfman Jack, with guests Paul McCartney, Wings, David Bowie, Bill Withers, the Jacksons and Brenda Lee. 1:00-2:30 a.m.-NBC.

Disco 77: The Ritchie Family are the hosts of Lou Rawls and Andrea True. 1:15-1:45 a.m.-Channel 2.

SATURDAY

Fat Albert: The gang learns one doesn't have to be a bully to get attention. 12:30-1:00 p.m.-CBS.

American Bandstand: The Ritchie Family does "The Quiet Village and the Village People - perform "San Francisco." 12:30-1:30 p.m.-Channel 7.

Famous Classic Tales: An animated version of Charles Dickens "A Christmas Carol," the story of Ebenezer Scrooge. 1:00-2:00 p.m.-CBS.

Mata: Dee Snell welcomes black authors Chris Hall, Mary Carter Smith, Fran Beckels, Lily Patterson and Jerome Dyson Wright. 1:00-1:30 p.m.-Channel 13.

Soul Train: Ashford and Simpson and Ronnie Dyson are guests on today's show. 5:00-6:00 p.m.-Channel 5.

Dr. Seuss: "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" — holiday story about the Whos, whimsical creatures who like nothing better than Christmas, North of Whoville lives the Grinch, with a heart two sizes too small. 8:00-8:30 p.m.-CBS.

Frosty the Snowman: Adventures of the snowman who came to life. 8:30-9:00 p.m.-CBS.

The Jeffersons: Louise prevails on her workaholic husband to hire a general manager. 9:00-9:30 p.m.-CBS.

SUNDAY

1977 All-American Team: The nation's top collegiate gridders, as selected by the Football Writers Association of America. 12:30-1:00 p.m.-ABC.

Gift of Winter: Residents of a land without snow journey to the Ministry of Winter to petition for relief from their cold, dark and windy winters. 3:00-3:30 p.m.-Channel 2.

Rudolph's Shiny New Year: Animated fantasy, which finds Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer on a new mission for Santa, locating Happy, the Baby New Year whose disappearance could bring time to a halt jeopardizing future Christmases. 7:00-8:00 p.m.-ABC.

Six Million Dollar Man: Ray Walston plays Scrooge like government contractor who takes a dim view of the yuletide until Steve teaches him the meaning of Christmas. 8:00-9:00 p.m.-ABC.

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