At right is 'The Mean Machine,' the backup group for the Commodores, from left, are Darrnell Jones, David Cochrane, Harold Hudson and Winston Sims. Below is Walter Orange.



The Commodores

(Continued from Page 18)

or Japanese or German. If it's admirable, they'll listen to it. To suggest that the Commodoresare dissatisfied with their black audience, is unfair.

"This is a black tour we're

doing, our promotion over stations and in print was aimed at black audiences. Now it is advantageous to advertise in the white press as well." The fans are black and white and the Commodores are READ all over.

ON CAPITOL RECORDS AND TAPES NATALIE COLE .





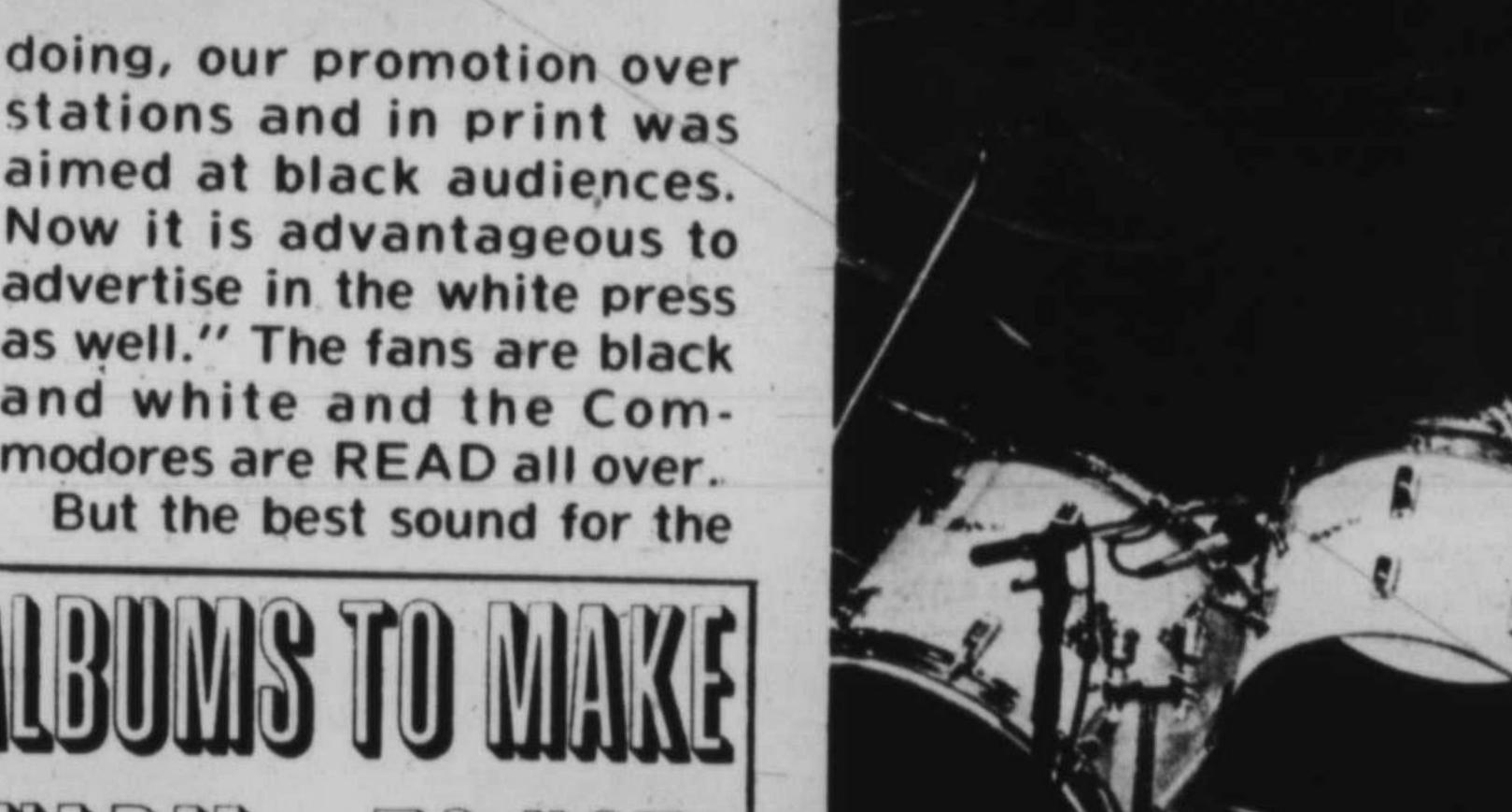








FREDA PAYNE Stares And Whispers



Commodores is the clinking and tinkling of coins at the box office. They are prepared to pinch pennies and peddle their Commodore tee-shirts around the world. Their business ventures are many.

"Our organization is fresh and new and profitable for the moment." says Ashburn. "Their attitude is positive. If they should lose, could see the Commodores standing by the roadside cheering and applauding as the winners go by.

Lead singer Lionel Richie; guitarist, Thomas McClary; bassist, Ronald LaPread; trumpeter, William King; drummer, Walter Orange

and Milan Williams on keyboard are the equal ingredients for Commodores.

They realize it's not a rare happening for talented persons to leave the business bankrupt. Sly And The Family Stone have recently tried to recuperate from their tragic loss. I happened to be in the New York Penthouse Office while interviewing the group.

I asked, "What makes this group any different from any other?" "Black Beatles," was Ashburn's

Says Commodores, "Talent is our commodity, survival is our option, and show biz is our business to win."

Benjamin Ashburn The Man Behind

By Vashti McKenzie

It takes more than talent to be successful in the music industry. You need producers, agents, technicians, designers and of course, managers.

Benjamin Ashburn was minding his own business, a public relations firm in New York, when the Commodores came along in the summer of 1968.

Ashburn didn't rush them into stardom. He brought them along gently. Thomas McClary, Lionel Richie, Milan Williams, Walter Orange, William King and Ronald LaPread, The Commodores, spent their summers in New York growing and learning their profession. For the next three years, they spent their winters going to school in uskegee.

The group's break came when they began to open the show on a Jackson's tour. This lead to work with Motown Records.

"We're totally self-contained and that is the basic key to success," said Ashburn from his New York office. "Everything has been coordinated within the corporation."

The Commodores Entertainment Corporation includes five companies. The transportation company of buses and trucks not only services the need of the group but other entertainers as well. There's an in-house public relations firm and publishing company, the Commodores write their own music.

The production company has signed two new acts, Three Ounces of Love and Platinum Hook to the cor-

poration. There's also a fulltime in-house attorney and accounting staff.

"What has happened is that we have formed a basic music conglomeration," said Ashburn. "I'm the president of all the companies.

"What I do is coordinate 20 full-time people. I also do all the negotiations for all movies."

The Commodores starred in the movie "Thank Goodness It's Friday." Final shooting took place in California a few months ago. A documentary film is planned based on the Commodores tour.

Ashburn, a bachelor New York native, said that he and the group are a close family. The graduate of Central State feels grateful

that he's been able to see the

group go to the top of the in-

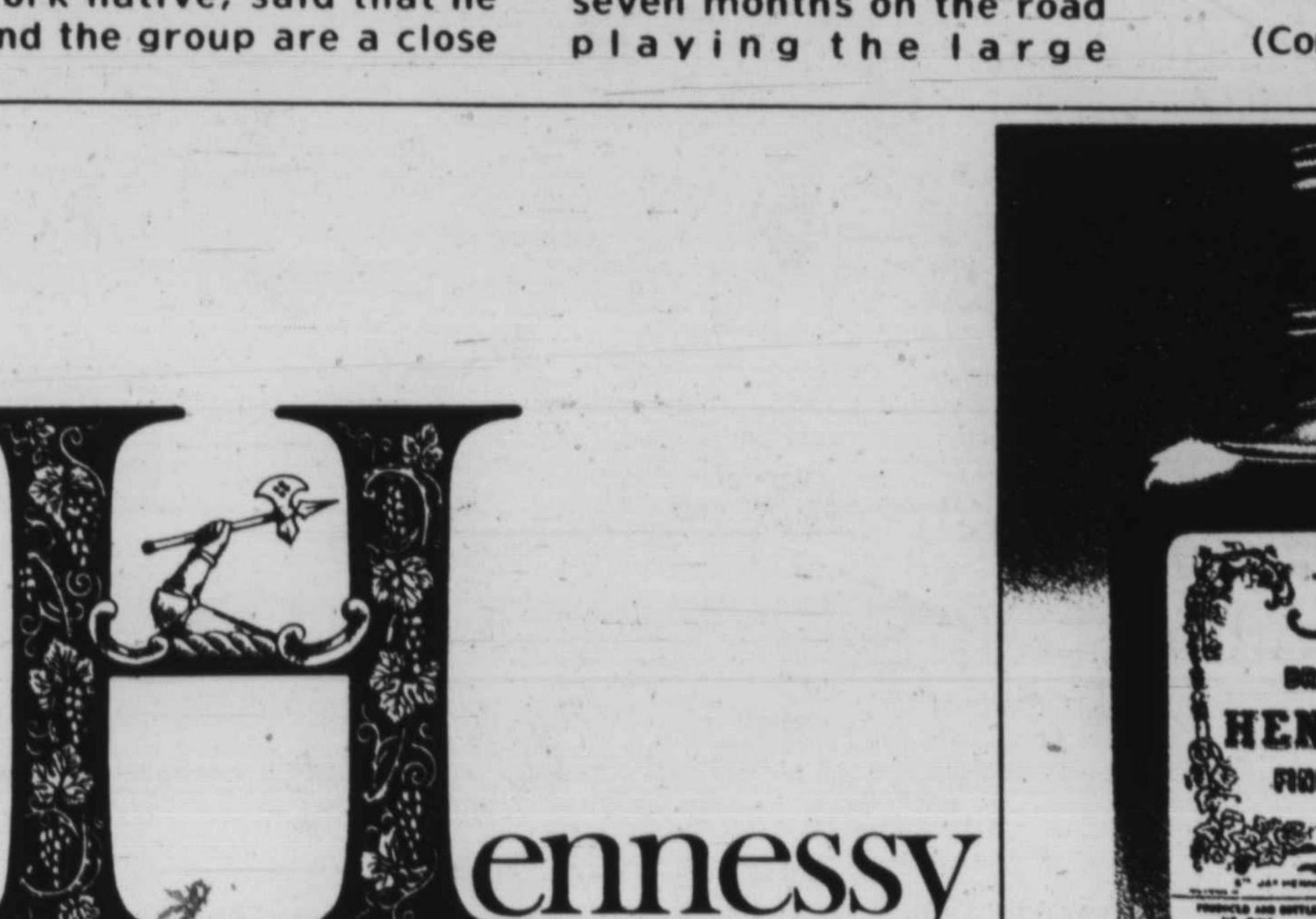
The Commodores spend seven months on the road

dustry.

auditoriums in the United States and overseas:

Bill Whitten, considered to be the number one costume designer, does the trappings for the Commodores. The

(Continued on Page 28)



take me along. In a flask-size portion of the world's most civilized spirit. For those who believe that a little bit of a good thing is the best alternative.

HENNESSY COGNAC, 80 PROOF, IMPORTED BY SCHIEFFELIN & CO., N.Y.



process ---