What's Happening

by Ida Peters

Last weekend, the Arena Players presented the Baltimore theatre - going public with a wonderful rendition of William Inge's "Picnic." Audiences on every night enjoyed the performances of such actors as Verna Day, Mary West Miller, George Barrick, Vonnie Covington, Ronnie Larkins, Virgil St. George, Kit Carpenter, and many others. The beautiful costumes were all designed and constructed by Mary Hall, another talented Arena Player.

Mrs. Joan Coursey has done a marvelous job combining the talents of the veteran Arena Players along with some newcomers such as Bonita Cartwright, Steven Johnson, Adrienne Coursey, and Kay Waters.

Three weekends remain for the public to see this enjoyable performance. The dates are as follows; Jan. 13-15, 20-22, and 27-29. One matinee performance is scheduled and that is Jan. 15 at 2:30 p.m.

Art produced by Baltimore City Jail inmates will be featured in the 2nd Annual Art Exhibit sponsored by the Theta Chi Chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

The exhibit, which includes paintings and drawings of still lifes, portraits, and abstract designs, will be displayed in the overpass gallery of the UMBC Library Jan. 16 through Feb. 12.

Library gallery hours are Mon. through Thurs., 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Fri., 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Sat., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Sun., 1 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Last performances of "Paul Robeson," starring James Earl Jones at The New Mechanic are this weekend.

The critically acclaimed production was only scheduled to be in Baltimore for a short one week. Better put it on your must see list.

Opening Tues. Jan. 17 is "Chicago" starring Jerry Orbach and featuring Penny Worth and Carolyn Kirsch.

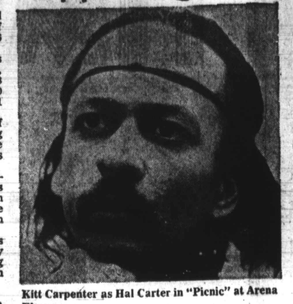
William Marshall has been excused from the production of "Timbuktu!" due to open at the Kennedy Center Opera House Sat. Jan. 14 for personal reasons. Joe — death in the family. His understudy will take over until he returns.

Washington and Baltimore have been holding their breaths in recent weeks waiting for the opening of this colorful musical also starring Eartha Kitt, and Melba Moore. Geoffrey Holder mounts the spectacular. He did the same for "The Wiz" remember?

The Vagabond Players continue their classic melodramatic murder mystery "Ladies in Retirement" this weekend through Jan. 29 at the theater, 806 S. Broadway in Fells Point.

Because of an overflow attendance at last Saturday's screening, the Charlie Chaplin classic, "The Great Dictator," will be given a repeat performance in the Wheeler auditorium of the central Pratt Library, 400 Cathedral Street, this Saturday (Jan. 14) at 10 a.m.

Written, directed and produced by Chaplin, the film stars the late comedian as a good - hearted Jewish barber whose resemblance to the tyrannical German dictator, Adenoid Hynkel (Adolf Hitler) leads to a series of tragi - comic episodes.



Kitt Carpenter as Hal Carter in "Picnic" at Arena Players.

...all that Jazz

By Bob Matthews

Got a chance to hear a couple of the local jazz groups over the past week, and was pleasantly surprised at what we heard.

Scott Cunningham and his group were the opening act at the Stanley Turrentine concert at the Civic Center, and immediately showed that the group has jelled.

They will have to be considered a fusion group, rather than a pure jazz one, but enough jazz spills over to qualify them for billing as jazz artists.

Scott is not a spectacular guitarist, although the Spanish influence is apparent in his playing. He seems to favor himself more as a vocalist than an instrumentalist, and it took a couple of numbers to figure out to whom his style is similar.

Finally, it came to me that his singing was in the Lou Rawls vein, with Caribbean overtones. Pleasant, but again not spectacular.

Cunningham et al, have found that high - energy - fusion groove, and seemed able at will to bring the crowd to a fever pitch.

Outside of a pianist, who provides the stabbing influence in the group, the remainder of the quintet are rhythmists. (If there is such a word) At any rate, they kept the pulsing drive going, and it was pleasing to hear.

All in all, the Scott Cunningham aggregation has found its niche, and are rapidly acquiring bigtime polish. They'll soon branch out to play their own distinctive stylings. Then — you can expect to see them stick nationally.

Might say just a word about the Turrentine portion of the show. His, was a more or less uninspired performance. Adequate — but full of hype for his recordings.

He had great difficulty with the sound engineers. The system was beautifully set up, with a battery of speakers at each end of the stage, but the miking was not what the artists wanted or needed!

All high energy groups feed on their own sound. They have to hear the music coming back before they can build to a series of crescendoes.

Engineers, especially sound engineers, like to keep things in perfect balance. They don't like to see peaks on their VU meters.

Turrentine evidently could not hear himself. His horn did not soar above the accompaniment as he wanted. He gestured to the engineers, who were in the back of the hall, to no avail.

He sent a runner to them with a message to turn up the pot on his mike — useless. It was cranked up a notch for a few minutes, but as soon as the group delved into some section work — back came the homogenous sound.

He finally gave up, and tried to live with the way the engineers wanted it done.

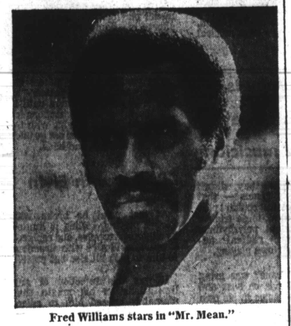
Bill Lane in Hollywood

Fred Williamson phoned from New York to where he'd fled right after New Year's to promote his newest motion picture, "Mr. Mean." The pic premiered in Atlanta, and is doing OK at the nation's theaters, reports go.

One thing for sure, no matter how the controversies shape up about the major movies, the stellar casts, the cultural imports, etc., theater owners will quickly say send them at once any new movie by Fred Williamson and Rudy Ray Moore. Some may call them Grade Z flicks. They surely are not the very best of films. But the people who consistently go to the movie houses do go to see "relative" stuff, something to which they can immediately relate, emotionally or materially. White youngsters camp out in sleeping bags to see science fiction put - ons, and black moviegoers, for the most part, flock to see the "get - down" caliber of films. Theater owners, and not the critics, attest to this fact.

And all the while, black filmmakers like Fred Williamson and Rudy Ray Moore keep on making money, are always able to get money to film, and chalk up successes consistently. Rudy Ray Moore is currently clicking with his newest since "Dolemite" flick, "Petey Wheatstraw."

Speaking of movies, Gary Stromberg, who with Art Linson produced "Car Wash," is back again now with another unusual movie, "The Fish That Saved Pittsburgh." Unusual in that it's about a peculiar basketball team whose players were all born under the astrological sign of Pisces. Art Linson is now doing his own flick about the late New York deejay, Allan Freed. Stromberg, once married to comedienne Chelsea Brown, has what many say is a winner with his fish story. He snared talented Gil Moses to direct his pic, from a screenplay by another ultra - talented black craftsman, Jaison Starkes, who wrote the AIP screenplay "J.D.'s, Revenge," and who now is in heavy demand on the Hollywood scene for screenplays. The music score possibly will be done by Earth, Wind and Fire, and for his basketball players in the film Stromberg is seeking none others than Kareem Abdul - Jabbar, Wilt Chamberlain, Julius Irving and the Harlem Globetrotters' Meadowlark Lemon and Curly Neal.



Fred Williams stars in "Mr. Mean."

Weekend TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson

Friday

Mike Douglass: Singer Kenny Rogers is the co-host with Marianne Gordon Rogers, Kip Addotta, and the Group Turning Point. 4:30-6:00 p.m.-Channel 13.

Evening Magazine: A day with Dr. Mark Rogers at John Hopkins Hospital; tips on how to keep throw rugs from walking. 7:30-8:00 p.m.-Channel 13.

All Star Comedy Ice Revue: Precision routines and musical comedy acts by members of the Ice Capades Highlight this program. 8:00-9:00 p.m.-CBS.

Midnight Special: Guests hosts tonight are the O'Jays, with guests England Dan, Dee Sharpe Gamble, Billy Preston and others. 1:00-2:30 a.m.-NBC.

Saturday

Fat Albert: The evils of narcotics are spelled out to the gang. 12:30-1:00 p.m.-CBS.

Soul Train: The Sylvers sing "Any Way You Want Me" and Lawrence-Hilton Jacobs does "Fly Away." 1:30-2:30 p.m.-Channel 11.

The Jeffersons: George offers an executive post to his laid off and inexperienced son. 9:00-9:30 p.m.-CBS.

Super Night at the Super Bowl: Andy Williams, Paul Williams, and Joe Namath are the hosts for this freewheeling salute to Super Bowl XII. With Forster Brooks, Natalie Cole, The Mills Brothers and many others as guests. 10:00-11:30 p.m.-CBS.

Sunday

Look Up And Live: Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church is the setting for a program commemorating the birthday of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) 10:30-11:00-Channel 2.

Superstars: Baseball stars George Brett (Royals) Steve Garvey (Dodgers) Joe Morgan, (Reds) and Jim Rice (RedSox) are among the participants in the second men's preliminary competition. 2:00-3:15 p.m.-Channel 13.

Super Bowl XII: The Denver Broncos (12-2 in the regular season) meet the Dallas Cowboys (12-2) in the Super Bowl XII at New Orleans. 6:00-9:30 p.m.-CBS.

Wonderful World of Disney: "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory," a tuneful blend of satire and fancy based on Roald Dahl's children's book. 7:00-9:00 p.m.-NBC.

Ashford and Simpson will perform a medly of their hits on the Merv Griffin Show Jan. 13.

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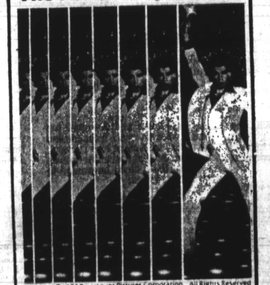
The Fever is Spreading



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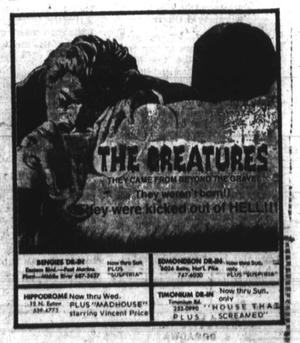

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AFRO readers VOTE 'American Music Awards'

AFRO readers have a chance to express their views as to the top stars of 1977 and compare their choices with the rest of the country.

Stevie Wonder, Loretta Lynn, Waylon Jennings and Barry White, with three each, top the list of nominees for the Fifth Annual American Music Awards to be televised live, Jan. 16.

AFRO readers have until Jan. 15 to clip the ballot below and mail to:

AFRO Music Awards
628 N. Eutaw St.
Baltimore, Md. 21201

The two - hour ABC Broadcast will be from the Santa Monica, Calif., Civic Auditorium with Glen Campbell, David Soul and Natalie Cole as hosts.

NOMINATIONS

Aretha Franklin

Natalie Cole

Donna Summer

Barry White

George Benson

Stevie Wonder

Favorite Male Vocalist
( ) Peter Frampton
( ) Barry Manilow
( ) Stevie Wonder

Favorite Female Vocalist
( ) Rita Coolidge
( ) Linda Ronstadt
( ) Barbara Streisand

Favorite Duo, Group or Chorus
( ) Eagles
( ) Fleetwood Mac
( ) K.C. and the Sunshine Band

Favorite Albums
( ) Hotel California - Eagles
( ) Rumors - Fleetwood Mac
( ) Star Wars Soundtrack - Meco

Favorite Single
( ) I Just Want to be Your Everything - Andy Gibb
( ) Star Wars - Meco
( ) You Light Up My Life - Debby Doone

Country Music

Favorite Male Vocalist
( ) Waylon Jennings
( ) Kenny Rogers
( ) Conway Twitty

Favorite Female Vocalist
( ) Crystal Gayle
( ) Loretta Lynn
( ) Dolly Parton

Favorite Duo, Group or Chorus
( ) George Jones and Tammy Wynette
( ) Statler Brothers
( ) Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn

Favorite Albums
( ) Are You Ready for County - Waylon Jennings
( ) New Harvest, First Gathering - Dolly Parton
( ) Ol Waylon - Waylon Jennings

Favorite Single
( ) Lucille - Kenny Rogers
( ) She's Got You Loretta Lynn
( ) Southern Nights - Glen Campbell

Soul Music

Favorite Male Vocalist
( ) George Benson
( ) Barry White
( ) Stevie Wonder

Favorite Female Vocalist
( ) Natalie Cole
( ) Aretha Franklin
( ) Donna Summer

Favorite Duo, Group or Chorus
( ) Commodores
( ) Earth, Wind and Fire
( ) K.C. and the Sunshine Band

Favorite Albums
( ) Barry White Sings for Someone You Love - Barry White
( ) Commodores - The Commodores
( ) Songs in the Key of Life - Stevie Wonder

Favorite Single
( ) Best of My Love - Emotions
( ) Brick House - Commodores
( ) It's Estasy When You Lay Down Next to Me - Barry White

New Television series for two veterans

by Vashti McKenzie

Baby it's cold outside! There isn't a better time to sit down and relax with whatever or whomever makes you feel warm inside and see what new television shows debut for the media's "second season."

"Baby, I'm Back" is a new situation comedy starring Demond Wilson and Denise Nicholas. It's a cute unique story of a legally deceased husband who tries to bring his "dead marriage" back to life.

It's a return to regular prime - time series for Wilson and Nicholas. Wilson starred as the younger junkman on "Sanford and Son" series with Redd Foxx. When the faded blue comedian left for greener pastures at ABC-TV, Wilson upped his price. NBC balked and Wilson walked.

Wilson began his stage career at the age of four and besides "Sanford", he also guest starred in "All In The Family" and appeared in the film "The Organization".

Nicholas starred for four years in the TV series "Room 222". Recently she's been teamed with Bill Cosby in a number of films including "Let's Do It Again". She's also appeared in "Blacula", "The Soul of Nigger Charley" and "Capricorn One".

In this new series, Wilson is seen as Ray Ellis, a young man who left his beautiful wife, Olivia (Nicholas) and their two children Angie (Kim Fields) and Jordon (Tony Holmes) seven years ago because the pressures of married life were too much for him.

When Ellis hears that Olivia has had him pronounced legally dead so that she can remarry, he appears on the scene. Olivia's Pentagon boss and fiance, Col. Dickey (Ed Hall) is not too thrilled about Ellis trying to claim his legal right to be alive. Ellis tries to convince Olivia that he's a changed man and that they should take up where they'd left off.

Ellis thwarts Olivia and the colonel's first marriage attempt, thereby forcing her to seek an injunction forbidding him to interfere. She's determined to marry her colonel before Ellis can have himself declared "alive" and in this she is ably abetted by her mother, Lucelle (Helen Martin) who has always considered Ellis to be a dead issue anyway. as a husband.

It becomes a hilarious legal race for the matrimonial wire. Ellis is attempting to legally maneuver his way back into Olivia's life before her "I do's" with Col. Dickey. Martin, was recently seen in the TV series "That's My Mama", mini - series "Roots" and film "A Hero Ain't Nothing But A Sandwich". She's also had a distinguished stage career appearing in "Purlie", "The Little Foxes", "The Blacks" and "A Street Car Named Desire", to name a few.

The two actors who portray the children in the new series are not novices either. Kim Fields, 8, appeared in the movies "Come Back Charleston Blue" and "The Taking of Pelham One, Two, Three" and on TV in "Executive Suite" and "Cos".

Twelve - year - old Tony Holmes recently appeared in Broadway in "Shenandoah", pilot TV film "You're Gonna Love It Here" and upcoming film biography of Martin Luther King Jr.

Ed Hall has guest starred in many TV series including "Mannix", "Rosetti and Ryan" and "Medical Center". He also was a member of the original casts of "Raisin in the Sun" and "No Time for Sergeants".

"Baby, I'm Back" has an interesting premise. I hope the laughs and unique lasts for a long time. The show premieres Mon. Jan. 30 on CBS.

Denise Nichols and Demond Wilson co - star in a new comedy series debuting Jan. 30 "Baby, I'm Back."

Top Jazz Albums

1 Heads — Bob James
2 Reach For It — George Ducke
3 Feels So Good — Chuck Magione
4 Ruby, Ruby — Gato Barbieri
5 Tequila Mockingbird — Ramsey Lewis
6 Action — Blackbyrds
7 New Vintage — Maynard Ferguson
8 Enigmatic Ocean — Jean-Luc Ponty
9 Blow It Out — Tom Scott
10 Magic — Billy Cobham

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React to Impact

By Frederick I. Douglass

With the release of their latest album "The Pac is Back", Baltimore's premier group Impact is laying down some sound tracks that you just have to react to. The members of Impact are Donald Tilghman, Charles Timmons, Quintin Simmons, and Damon Harris. The members of Impact first gained prominence in the Baltimore - Washington area while crooning under the name of the Vandals and landed a contract with T-Neck records to do an Isley Brothers produced album. The group gained national prominence, but for some reasons they couldn't hold things together and, according to Damon "As so many groups do, we forgot where we were coming from. . .we lost our perspective, and as a result, everything we built crumbled." And then came Damon's opportunity to go with the Temptations.

People always compared Damon to Eddie Kendricks and then one day he got the opportunity to audition for the Temptations. The next thing he knew he was on the road with the Temps and his voice was heard on six solid gold albums including "1990", "Masterpiece", "Solid Rock", All Directions", "House Party", and "A Song for You". But Damon never forgot his friends. After spending some time with the Temps and building up a reputation as a strong lead singer, Damon left the group, reunited the former members of the Vandals and formed a new group known as "Impact". The group's first album was appropriately titled Impact and made a big splash in the recording industry with the lead single "Happy Man".

Impact's continued evolution is displayed on "The Pac is Back" which contains powerful material like Bobbi Eli's up tempo monster "Song to Sing", as well as "My Love" and "Rainy Days" "Stormy Nights" by upcoming vocalist-composer Keith Barrow.

The strongest track on the album is "Sara Smile", a tune that was a big hit for its composers Hall and Oates. This just might be the jam that gets Impact over the hump. Impact is also doing big things with "Carry Me Back", another upbeat smoker. I predict that 1978 will be a big year for Impact, a product of Baltimore

Impact

This city has produced outstanding musical talent like Billie Holliday, Cab Calloway, and Pockets a group that is riding high on the Top 40 charts with their hot single and album "Come Go With Me". Be sure to react to Impact.

Top Spiritual Albums

1 Love Alive — Walter Hawkins & The Love Center Choir
2 First Lady — Shirley Caesar
3 Live at Carnegie Hall — James Cleveland
4 This Is Another Day — Andrae Crouch & The Disciples
5 Tonight's The Night — Gospel Keynotes
6 From Augusta With Love — Swanee Quintet
7 See You In The Rapture — Sensational Nightingales
8 Joy — Rev. Brunson & The Thompson Community Church Choir
9 He's STANDING By — Institutional Radio Choir Of Brooklyn, New York
10 Amazing Grace — Aretha Franklin

Top R&B Albums

1 All In All — Earth, Wind & Fire
2 Live! — The Commodores
3 Reach For It — George Duke
4 Menagerie — Bill Withers
5 Funkentelechy Vs. The Placebo Syndrome — Parliament
6 Flying High On Your Love — The Bar-Kays
7 Once Upon A Time — Donna Summer
8 Galaxy — War
9 In Full Bloom — Rose Royce
10 Thankful — Natalie Cole

Top Inspirational Albums

1 Mirror — Evie Tornquist
2 Home Where I Belong — B. J. Thomas
3 Dallas Holm & Praise LIVE
4 Gently Moments Evie Tournquist
5 Live From Nashville Jimmy Swaggart
6 His Hand In Mine — Elvis Presley
7 Moments For Forever — The Bill Gaither Trio
8 For Him Who Has Ears To Hear — Keith Green
9 Evergreen — Nancy Honey Tree
10 Live! The Very Best Of The Happy Goodman Family

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"The Other Club Med" 6/4-12/78 Negril Beach, Jamaica/from $525.00 pp.
Boooooooooooo 7/3-7/78 Montego Bay, Jamaica/from $215.00 pp.
Freeport Plana 7/6-11/78 Freeport Grand Bahamas/from $208.00 pp.
"Island in the Sun" 7/22-8/1/78 Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic From $299.00 pp.
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"The Fred Ball" 8/16-20/78 Freeport, Grand Bahamas/from $209.00 pp.
Aloha Deluxe 9/10-19/78 Oahu, Hawaii/from $630.00 pp.
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Gateway to West Africa 3/18-25/78 Senegal, Africa/from $799.00pp.
Ecological Beauty 3/31-26/78 Hamilton, Bermuda/from $477.00 pp.
Jazz Festival 5/19-21/78 Atlanta, Georgia/from $199.00 pp.
Jazz Festival at Sea 5/27-6/3/78 Bermuda Cruise/from $895.00 pp.
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