Expectations greater than realization

'The Me Nobody Knows'

By Ida Peters

You've always heard the saying "Don't let your expectations be greater than your realization"?

Don't get me wrong about the play "The Me Nobody Knows" now playing for two weeks at the Mechanic Theatre.

The press hype for "The Me" stressed Damon Evans returning in triumph to be the first black man under 30 to star in his hometown at the Mechanic.

Unlike "Bubbling Brown Sugar," which both Cab Calloway and Avon Long made over to their distinct personalities, or "For Colored Girls" where the producers made "The Lady In Red" the central figure, Gerri Dean who directed and staged the play built all the action around herself as Nell . . . she had six numbers and Lillie Mae, Tisha Campbell, a precocious darling little 8 - year old who had four big numbers.

Those of us who fell for the hype of seeing Damon Evans, star of The Jeffersons, qere only treated to Damon in two big numbers "What Happens To Life" and "War Babies."

The Me Nobody Knows" really has no star as such and all nine actors are on stage singing and dancing together. The spoken text in this production was written by children between the ages of 7 - 18 attending New York public schools in Bedford - Stuyvesant, Harlem, Jamaica, Manhattan and the Youth House in the Bronx.

Their songs and stories reflect their struggles, their fears their hopes and dreams.

Damon Evans turns in a fine performance but on opening night it seemed that lighting cues were off and some actors tried to upstage others.

This is understandable as this production is being produced by the Mechanic Theatre and the company has had to rehearse in uncomfortable surroundings at the Civic Center while "Bubbling Brown Sugar" was at the Mechanic last week. .

Gerri Dean (Nell) a polished actress gave a splendid performance. She made her Broadway debut in the original production of "The Me."

Baltimoreans will remember Gerri as the co - star with Linda Hopkins in "Me and Bessie" which played Shady Grove and Painters Mill a year ago. We all met at a press party in Columbia at Vashti McKenzie's.

Tisha Campbell (Lillie Mae) is darling and amazing. She's 8, 4' 2" and made her professional debut at 3 by winning a talent contest in Linden, N.J.

She has starred as an actress on NBC's "Unicorn Tales" and "The Magnificent Major" aired January, 1978.

She gets her musical talents from her parents, Rae and Cliff Campbell of Orange, N.J. Her mother still sings professionally.

As far as Damon is concerned don't let your expectations go beyond reality and go see "The Me." All the bugs should be ironed out by this weekend.

Spled in the audience Wednesday night were Vivian Bailey and a guest from Ohio; Ernest Brown and Virginia Williams; Celestine and Theodore Thompson, Yvette and Janer, Carol Linden, Bobby London, Alex Paez and Tony Michael Pann.

Cast of "The Me Nobody Knows" now playing at the Mechanic Theatre. Above, Tisha Campbell, Gerri Dean, Paula Desmond, Damon Evans, Ivan

Patti Labelle

Michael Henderson

Hot City: The Emotions and Evelyn Champagne King are featured on the first of a series of programs showcasing disco music and dance. 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. - Channel 5.

Fun in Inner Harbor

CTA Theatre, Baltimore's professional children's theatre company, returns to the Inner Harbor with their production of "The Mirroman." Featured as a part of the City's two free entertainment series for children, "The Mirroman" can be seen at The Little People's Program on Tues., Aug. 8, and Thurs., Aug. 10 at noon at the South Shore Pavilion.

For the working parents, Kid's Stuff will feature the CTA production on Thursday evening at 7 p.m. at the West Shore Stage. This audience participation play by Brian Way is the third in a series of four CTA productions scheduled for this summer.

All Little People's Program and Kid's Stuff presentations are offered free of charge. The public is encouraged to bring blankets and beac chairs for seating. For more detailed information call the Baltimore Office of Promotion and Tourism at 685 - TOUR (685 - 8687).

BSO

The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra will perform at this week's Salute to American Music on Tues., Aug. 8, at 8 p.m. at the Inner Harbor West Shore Stage.

Conducted by Andrew Schenk, the program includes "Royal Fireworks Music" by Handel - Hardy, "Overture to La Gazza Ladra" by Rossini, "Emperor Waltz" by J. Strauss, "Poet and Peasant Overture" by Suppe, Gould's "American Salute," and selections from Gershwin's "Girl Crazy" and Rodgers' "Sound of Music."

Tuesday, Aug. 15, the Inkspots.

Free Pratt films

Mon., Aug. 7

Central Library, Wheeler Auditorium: Films — "The Velveteen Rabbit," "Paddington Cleans Up," and "Mr. Curry Takes a Bath; Fortune Telling." 2 p.m.

Fells Point Center: Films — "Puss in Boots," "Wilbur's Story," "The Pufed - Up Dragon," and "Runt of the Litter." 7 p.m.

Top Inspirational Albums

1. Mirror Evie Tourniquist
2. For Him Who I'as Ears to Hear Keith Green
3. A Little Song of Joy For My Little Friends Evie Tournquist
4. Mansion Builders The 2nd Chapter of Acts
5. Gentle Moments Evie Tournquist
6. Emerging Phil Kaeggy Band
7. Music Machine Candle
8. Have You Kissed Any Frogs Today? Joe Reed
9. Tell 'Em Again Dallas Hom & Praise
10. This Is Not a Dream Pam Mark

Top Spiritual Albums

1. Love Alive Walter Hawkins & the Love Center Choir
2. Live at Carnegie Hall James Cleveland
3. When Jesus Comes Sara Jordon Powell
4. (Is There Any Hope For) Tomorrow James Cleveland & the Charles Fold Songers
5. Mama Prayed for Me Sensational Williams Bros.
6. Jesus is Coming Sensational Nightingales
7. Tonight's the Night Gospel Keynotes
8. Donald Vails Choraleers
9. Where He Leads Rev. Willingham
10. Since I Layed My Burdens Down The Swan Silver Tones

Top R & B Albums

1. Natural High The Commodores
2. Life Is A Song Worth Singing Teddy Pendergrass
3. Come Get It Rick James
4. Togetherness L. T. D.
5. A Taste of Honey
6. Sounds . . . And Stuff Like That Quincy Jones
7. Loveshine Con Funk Shun
8. So Full of Love The O'Jays
9. Smooth Talk Evelyn Champagne King
10. Showdown The Isley Brothers

Top R & B Singles

1. Boogie Oogie Oogie A Taste of Honey
2. You And I Rick James
3. Three Times A Lady The Commodores
4. Close the Door Teddy Pendergrass
5. Last Dance Donna Summer
6. Stuff Like That Quincy Jones
7. Shame Evelyn Champagne King
8. I Like Girls Fatback Band
9. Shake and Dance With Me Con Funk Shun
10. Stop Your Weeping The Dramatics

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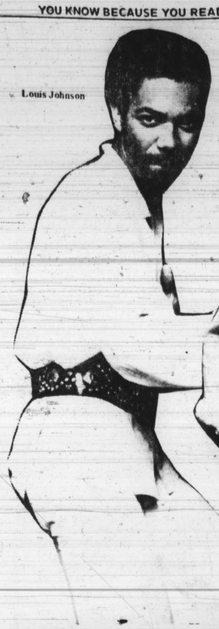
Interview of the week

The Brothers Johnson



Louis Johnson George Johnson

By Ida Peters

The Brothers Johnson, George and Louis were on extension phones in Los Angeles this week to talk to the AFRO.

About a month ago they made a quick tour and visited radio station WEEA in Baltimore and stopped off in D.C., Chicago, Atlanta and New Orleans to introduce their new album "Blam", produced by Quincy Jones, for A and M Records.

"I'm Louis and I'm George", they said which is quite confusing since they both sound alike. So the interview went on from there.

They say that they have been in rehearsals for the last month with Tony Award - winning choreographer and stage director George Faison. he did Earth, Wind and Fire's act. . .and "The Wiz".

The Brothers will take their "Blam" to the streets on August 8 for an 80 - city headline tour throughout the United States.

They will be at the Capital Center, Sept. 1; the Richmond Coliseum, Sept. 2 and Norfolk, Sept. 3.

They will also hit Madison Square Garden in N.Y. and Atlanta. When they return to L.A., they will record a live album to be released at Christmas.

They will be traveling with The Emotions.

As they go on the road they have a new custom - built stage with three tiers that revolves. It has silver city buildings and N.Y. like skyscrapers. It will cut down the time between acts to one minute, 30 seconds which should be good news for their fans accustomed to half hour intermissions while groups change instruments and sets.

The Brothers Johnson are family men and we laughed about how they are building their own orchestras.

Valerie (Mrs. Louis) has one child pictured on the record album "Blam", Kodi Riko, a Hawaiian name, meaning cleverness. Louis says they may have another young one on the way.

Debbie (Mrs. George), believe it or not was born in the same Los Angeles Hospital as her hubby. Louis says they are seven weeks expecting and he doesn't care whether its a son or daughter as long as it can make music. . .

George and Louis surprisingly say they are not from a musical family but picked up their musical genius on their own.

They spent a two - year stint with Billy Preston's band and gave up the security of a steady gig to pursue their own dreams of creative expression spending 10 hours a day working together for eight months until finally getting a call to play on a Quincy Jones session for his album "Mello Madness".

They did not prove to be a one hit wonder or a one - hit blunter. They produced "Right On Time" in 1977 and had a gold single "Strawberry Letter 23" and "Q," the musical tribute to Quincy Jones which won the Grammy as Best Instrumental Performance" of the year.

Louis and George say that their album "Blam" describes where they are today . . . growing . . . and the title "Blam" means "Hey, here we come again."

"Blam" opens with the cookin' "Ain't We Funkin' Now; then the ballad "So Won't You Stay" plus "Blam" the title tune. . .

"Ride - A - Rocket" leads off the second side and was written for The Brothers by Ashford and Simpson.

"Mista Cool" is a punctuated instrumental social comment followed by cousin Alex Weir on vocals on "It's You Girl".

Louis and George say on their tunes . . . we bake the cake with the bass and guitars and Quincy Jones adds the horns and strings and mixes it up.

To his fans Louis says "you have to be brave and strong and very dedicated to get better and better. To other musicians he says "practice makes perfect".

George says "Hang in there whatever type of music you're playing and you'll get your reward."

Baltimore needs Jazz Museum

By Frederick I. Douglass

While I am supportive of the concept of establishing a museum to honor Baltimore's Jazz greats, I am very much concerned that such a museum be done on a level of quality that will be commensurate with the major contributions that Baltimoreans like Billie Holliday, Eubie Blake and Cab Calloway have made to America's original art form.

First of all, a jazz museum should be an organic, breathing and living creative space where persons can listen to live performances as well as recordings that exemplify the various phases of Jazz from Dixieland on down through Ragtime, Be Bop, Cool, Avant Garde and other movements.

The museum should have a wide collection of records and tapes that would be made available to aspiring young musicians so that they can learn from the masters like John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, George Benson and scores of other talented artists who have brought about innovations in the music.

Secondly, the museum should have a full time curator who is knowledgeable about all phases of black music, not just Jazz, because black music exists in a continuum with Jazz, Gospel Rhythm n' Blues, Soul, and any other names you can think of being closely related to each other. The curator of the museum would play a vital role in selcting and displaying the artifacts of the cultural center in a meaningful manner. If the museum does not have a knowledgeable curator, then all that we will have is a place where important historical objects are stored haphazardly, but are of little use and meaning to the public.

Thirdly, the museum should be located in an area that is easily accessible to the black community so that our youths can visit there often. Black youths have few opportunities to learn about their heritage and the museum could provide them with positive role models that might facilitate their development into highly motivated adults who understand that black people have made many valuable contributions to this society.

Additionally, the Left Bank Jazz Society, an organization that sponsors more than forty concerts a year featuring internationally known talent, should play an integral role in the development and operation of the Jazz museum.

Hopefully Baltimore's Jazz museum will become a reality in the near future. Despite the fact that Baltimore is more than 50 percent black, very little is being done to recognize the enormous accomplishments of Baltimore's black writers, artists, photographers and other creative people.

At least the Jazz museum has the potential of being a step in the right direction provided that it is established and operated on the same level of quality as is being done with the beautification of the Inner Harbor, the revitalization of downtown Baltimore, the renovation of housing and other projects that have gained Baltimore worldwide fame as a progressive, forward thinking city.

TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson

Friday

Dr. Seuss: In "Horton Hears a Who," Horton, the good hearted elephant comes to the rescue of the microscopic land of Whoville, which is named by a pack of evil bullies and a sinister eagle. 8:00 - 8:30 p.m. - CBS.

Baseball: The Orioles vs the Yankees at New York. Channel 13.

Dr. Seuss: "The Lorax" is a gnomelike creature crusading for the threatened truffula tree, endangered because its silken tufts can be knitted into all purpose threeds. 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. - CBS.

CBS Movie: Sidney Poitier directed and stars in "A Warm December," about an American doctor in London who falls in love with the niece of an African ambassador. 9:00 - 11:00 p.m. - CBS.

Johnny Carson: Lola Falana, Sheeky Greene are the guests tonight. 11:30 - 1:00 a.m. - NBC.

Don Kirshner's Rock Concert: Guests tonight are Natalie Cole, Be - Hop Deluxe and comedy acts Natural Gas and Jim Samuels. 11:30 - 1:00 a.m. - Channel 9.

Midnight Special: A repeat of the 1972 series opener with John Denver, Linda Ronstadt, Helen Reddy, Cass Elliot, War, the Isley Brothers and many others. 1:00 - 2:30 a.m. - NBC.

Showdown of the Dream Teams: Phyllis Diller, Della Reese and Marty Allen judge celebrities vying in races, comedy sketches and song and dance routines. 1:10 - 1:55 a.m. - Channel 13.

Saturday

Fat Albert: The gang learns that cooking isn't just for girls and sports aren't just for boys in this tale. 12:00 - 12:30 p.m. - CBS.

Soul Train: Smokey Robinson and Patti Austin are the guests today. 12:30-1:30 p.m. - Channel 11.

From These Roots: Recalling great black artists of the 1920's like Duke Ellington, Bessie Smith and Paul Robeson. Also salute to author W. E. B. DuBois. 2:00-3:00 p.m. - Channel 26.

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