

Peter Brown



Ben Vereen

List the awards for the year given by the NAACP in Beverly Hills, Hollywood.

> Renee Sherline Trenton, N.J.

Okay! Here Goes: Ben Vereen, Entertainer of the

The Wiz, Best Stage Production; "The Greatest," Motion Picture of the Year;

Best Actor, Paul Winfield, "A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich";

Best Actress, Cicely Tyson; Best Male Vocalist, Stevie Wonder;

Best Female Vocalist, Natalie

Best Group, The Commodores;

Best. Jazz Vocalist, Ella Fitzgerald;

Best Gospel Singer, Shirley Caesar;

Best Blues Singer, B. B. King; Best TV Acting image, James Earl Jones, "The Greatest Thing That Almost Happened';

OBUBBINE TO

with JEANNE PARNELL

Best TV Series, The Jeffersons; Best actress, Isabel Sanford with Best director Jack Cher, best producers Don Nicholl, Michael Ross and Bernie West;

Special Posthumous Image, The Late Zara Cully.

Other special Image Award winners included Muhammad Ali, Dick Gregory, CBS Correspondent Ed Bradley, Gamble and Huff and Gil Scott Heron. Jim Brown was Image Award Chairman; Booker Griffin, Awards coordinator.

I can't believe Herbie Hancock is Singing???

> **Edward Tisoncik** Mobile Alabama

You better believe it and listen to his new album "Sunlight". He is singing through a new machine in which he can mix what he sings with what he plays, on a synthesizer and it really sounds great. The electronic device is called the vocoder. Says Herbie, "Nobody would want to hear the sound of my natural voice."

Is it true that Eartha Kitt admitted she only dates white men? Ike Johas Madison, Wisconsin

Eartha denies the rumor exclusively but exclaims, "So what if I did? It's nobody's business . . . ' don't see people as black or white. I see them as human beings . . . belong to no one race, but to all." In 1960 her marriage to Korean veteran Bill McDonald ended in divorce, when her daughter Kitt was four. "She was the reason I married," says Eartha. "I survived my childhood, my lovers, my banishment, two presidents

Why are blacks always doing black films?

and a war."

Rosalind Sapin Garden City, N.Y.

All letters should be addressed to Jeanne Parnell, Dawn

Magazine, 628 N. Eutaw St., Baltimore, Md. 21201. All

questions are welcomed, but while Jeanne cannot provide

individual answers, questions of general interest will be

George Bowser, staff producer of "Vegetable Soup," made a 20minute film called Helen, about a Jewish girl escaping the Nazis during World War II, a remarkable period piece film.

used in this column.

When asked why he made a "Jewish film," he replied that he wanted to prove that blacks could make more than just black films. Is Maggie Lena Walker going to

be on the new one dollar bill?

Chicago, Ill.

Ms. Walker of Richmond, Va. is the only black among 55 names presented to the Treasury Department and Congress for depiction on the coin. Ms. Walker, born two years after the Civil War ended, became the first woman president of a bank in the United

Does Scoody Thornton of "Bad News Bears" really want to be a baseball player?

> Inez Winley Miami, Florida

Scoody signed his contract for the film on his sixth birthday. Says Tony Curtis, "He's terrific and worth a million." Says Papa Thornton, "Scoody fixes his own breakfast every morning. He can read as well as you and I, and has already been labeled a "gifted child". I'd imagine he can play ball in any park.

Is it true that Peter Brown taped his first successful single in a bedroom?

> Jimmy George Kansas City

Peter was living with his parents. He bought a four track tape recorder, built a stand for it and began to record. He bought an electric piano and an Arp synthesizer and moved them into the bedroom too. Eventually the room got so crowded says Peter, "I had to move out." So "Do You Wanna Get Funky With Me" is straight out of the sheets.

Were there any black filmmakers during the early days of silent films?

> Bootsy Spiller L.A., California

Oscar Micheaux was the first to complete a feature length film "The Homesteader", based on his experiences as a frontiersman



Kitt and Eartha



Scoody Thornton

in South Dakota. He was not however the first black to make a feature film. The first was Booker Γ. Washington's secretary, Emmett Scott. He made a film protesting and refuting D. W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation", which portrayed the blacks during the Reconstruction as corrupt and lawless. Scott ran out of money and had to seek white leaders who insisted on changes.

"Alice" Vinnette Carroll's mostly black musical version of "Alice in Wonderland" folded. I heard millions of doilars went into that show.

> Janet Clark Norfolk, Va.

After three weeks of what was supposed to be a ten week pre -Broadway engagement, it just failed. There was an attempt to avoid an "all black" tag by prominently billing Alice Ghostly and Paula Kelly along with Debbie Allen. A charge that too little advertising went in, was contradicted by Lex Carlin who asserted that more lineage was purchased in the black Tribune than any other local newspaper in Philly. I think he was trying to tell

INSTANT HITS NOTHING NEW TO THE O'JAYS!

When they started out 20 years ago, they thought that you could go out, hustle a little, and soon be discovered.

By KIP BRANCH

It is extremely difficult to write about the O'Jays, the three man singing group made up of singers Sammy Strain, Eddie Levert, and Walter Williams that has continually delivered a poignant musical message for more than 20 years now.

And, the difficulty in writing about the O'Jays is caused by the fact that they have done so much.

In a musical genre where many have made it but many others have failed, the O'Jays have, in the lyrical delivery and the words of their songs touched upon virtually all of the areas of human consciousness. And they have done it just by singing.

Among the many songs that the O'Jays have recorded are: "Put Your Hands Together," "For The Love of Money," "This Air I Breathe," and "Ship Ahoy," all from earlier albums recorded during the mid - 60s.

Their latest album, (which is already platinum, it made it in 5 weeks) "Traveling at the Speed of Thought" has made its way to the top of musical charts across the country, and their single, "Cry Together" was an instant hit.

Instant hits are nothing new to Walter Williams, Eddie Levert, or Sammy Strain (who replaced William Powell in the group which originally numbered five), because they have always known that they had talent.

HUSTLE A LITTLE

"We were kids after fame when we started out," says Levert looking back over the early years. "No matter how hard it was, it (making it) was easier than it is today. We thought that you could go out, hustle a little, and soon be discovered.

"How can you tell someone so young that it takes determination and hard work to make it? But today, although we still love to

sing, we also are deeply involved in the business end of our career - it's not fun, but it's important. Like most singing groups who

are acknowledged professionals in the rough and tumble music industry, the majority (virtually all) of the lyrics of the O'Jays' songs are from real experiences that they themselves have dealt with. "Look at 'Desire Me,' says Strain, "what can you say but that we've all gone through it - we've all felt desire and love at one time or another."

During their early days the group was known as the Mascots, the name that they chose during high school when they played small black clubs in and around their home town of Canton, Ohio

However, they were quickly spotted by disc jockey Eddie O'Jay. He taught them professionalism, and in appreciation they switched names. MESSAGE SONGS

The O'Jays

All three O'Jays, Williams, Levert, and Powell are-quick to acknowledge their union with the songwriting team of Gamble and

Says Williams, "Message songs are their - Gamble and Huff's - trip which is fine because it is also ours. I totally agree with what they are laying down - making people aware of themselves and the world around

"It makes people think. And I don't just mean black people, but

anyone who listens. There's an uplifting feeling that we all can stand getting a little of."

When they appear on stage it is immediately apparent that the O'Jays know what they are doing and that their performance (the strength and depth of it) will be controlled by their audience. And at a recent performance in Baltimore, the crowd on hand gave them all of the fuel that they

A long medley of O'Jay hits was played by the band, and then onto the stage, dressed in capes with collars that resembled the one worn by the Wiz in the Wizard of Oz, came Williams, Strain, and Levert. As has been their trademark, they were stepping

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