New movies

Madge Sinclair stands between defeated man and helpless boy in 'Uncle Joe Shannon'

Madge Sinclair, who received international attention playing the wife of Kunta Kinte in the television presentation of Alex Haley's "Roots," stars with Burt Young, Doug McKeon and Jason Bernard in "Uncle Joe Shannon," A Robert Chartoff-Irwin Winkler Production for release by United Artists, a Transamerica Company.

Ms. Sinclair is cast in "Uncle Joe Shannon" as Margaret, a woman whose pragmatism is tempered with compassion for a defeated man and helpless boy. The powerful drama was directed by Joseph C. Hanwright and written by Burt Young, who plays the title-role.

Madge Sinclair was born April 26, in Kingston, Jamaica. While studying at Kingston's Shortwood College, a teacher training institution, she was head of the drama club. Upon graduation, she taught elementary school and married Royston Sinclair, a law enforcement official for whom she is now divorced. The couple had two sons, Garry and Wayne, who are now teen-agers.

After teaching for a while, she embarked on a second career as a successful life insurance underwriter. At the urging of friends, she entered the annual music competition at Trinity College during the Festival. To her surprise, she walked away with the top score for a mezzo soprano.

"I desperately wanted to be in a creative field," the actress recalls. "I decided to go to New York City, where the opportunities were so much greater. I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, but I wanted to be in the arts. I had family in Manhattan, so in 1968 I decided to give it a try."

Among Madge's New York relatives is Margaret Jackson, a moving force behind the Benefit Ball And Fashion Show staged each year at the Waldorf Astoria to benefit the NAACP. She is also related to Marcus Garvey, founding president of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. The University of California at Los Angeles recently acquired the Marcus Garvey Papers Project, which soon will result in a published work.

"In New York, I worked as an accountant and also transferred negotiable stocks at a bank," she continues. "And then I began modeling. Fortunately, times were right for tall, black-skinned models, so I earned up to $60 an hour."

Once a prominent, prosperous musician, now a down-and-out-bum, Joe Sannon (Burt Young) conjures up memories of better days as he joins the band in a friends night club.

Surveying the situation, her goal became to work with Joe Papp's Shakespeare Festival Theatre. A determined, positive thinker, she was acting with Papp's organization by 1969. She has since appeared at the Young Vic Theatre in London and the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. Among the plays in which she has acted are "Ti-Jean And His Brother," "Kumaliza," "Mod Donna," "Blood," "Ipheigenia" and "Lady Day."

Her film debut was with Jon Voight in "Conrack," in which she played the uptight island school principal. "I didn't expect to get the part. They kept telling me how good I was but that I didn't look the part at all," remembers the beautiful woman noted for her high, sculptured cheek bones. "After being called back by the filmmakers several times, I decided to appear as the character, very plain, unexciting and unattractive. They didn't even recognize me, so it worked. I got the job on one condition. I had to wear that same outfit in the movie!"

Her subsequent motion pictures include "Leadbelly," "I Will, I Will . . . For Now," "Cornbread, Earl and Me" and "Brothers." Prior to "Uncle Joe Shannon," she starred with Kris Kristofferson, Ali MacGraw, Ernest Borgnine, Burt Young and Franklyn Ajaye in United Artists' Convoy," in which she played tough truck driver called Widow Woman.

On television, her role as Bell in "Roots" earned her an Emmy nomination from the Television Academy of Arts And Sciences and a nomination from the Television Critics Circle. She has guest-starred in a wide variety of TV series, including "All In The Family" and "The Waltons," and appeared on "As The World Turns" for three years.

She made a special appearance in the highly - acclaimed "Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman" and played Essie in the PBS special "Almos' A Man." Her most recent TV work includes two movies, Maya Angelou's autobiographical "I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings," in which she portrays the teacher who helps the young girl learn to speak again, and "One In A Million," in which she is cast as the mother of Detroit "Tigers" prison — trained baseball star Ron LeFlore.

When filing "Uncle Joe Shannon" for producers Irwin Winkler and Robert Chartoff and executive producer Gene Kirkwood, Ms. Sinclair was signed to star with Jack Albertson on a new ABC Television series "Grandpa Goes To Washington."

Last fall she opened an art gallery called Giammalca, a name inspired by the ancient spelling of her native Jamaica. Located in the seaside Los Angeles area of Venice, it serves to promote Caribbean artists and functions as a cultural center. The gallery is actively managed by Madge and her fiance-manager Dean Compton.

The actress, who is five feet, ten inches tall and weighs 150 pounds, lives in a Frank Lloyd Wright home in the Los Feliz section of Los Angeles. "Though I consider myself a very professional actress and work hard at it," Ms. Sinclair summarizes, "my overriding concern is my family. Show business is just the sideshow in my life."

Margaret (Madge Sinclair) protectively holds Robbie (Doug McKeon) in a tense moment in "Uncle Joe Shannon."

Bill Lane in Hollywood

FOR its 1979 issue, the World Almanac added Erma Bombeck and Mary Tyler Moore to its list of America's 25 most influential women. The three black women in the list remain Patricia Roberts Harris, Barbara Jordan and Coretta Scott King.

ZULEMA is back into singing, her songs due out now on the new LeJoint label to be distributed by London Records, and **Hodges, James & Smith** are still together, at least on records, having just recorded a new album on London. After looking thru the many names of stars Universal has set for its movie, "Airport '79 Concorde," finding even that of sensuality queen Sylvia Kristel, I came across a soul person's name, that of Cicely Tyson.

JON Hendricks scored mightily with his "Evolution of The Blues" instantly when he opened it her in L. A. after four years of showing in San Francisco. Says he now plans to take it to New York. Hendricks always loves to regale people with stories of his years singing in Detroit clubs during the days of the Purple Gang and the Michigan Mafia.

SOPRANO sax star **Ronnie Laws** said on the Malcolm W. Adams show here on KACE radio that he added singing to his displayed talents on suggestion of jazzman Wayne Henderson, and that he sees no sacrilege on the part of jazz instrumentalists who sing, mentioning counterparts Herbie Hancock, George Benson and George Duke. There are others, too, from years back and into the present, like Grady Tate, Les McCann, Willie Bobo and Roy Ayers — and Nat King Cole.

BLACK Enterprise quotes Andrew Brimmer: "With rising incomes, an increasing proportion of better-paid black families is migrating from the central city to the suburbs." Many of them are running from and deserting the NAACP, the organization that fought court battles to get them there. Now the NAACP labors in the vineyard jungles of the inner cities to help the black people unable to flee.

Special note to the new suburbanites: Please put now a dollar (or more) into an envelope each week and send it to the NAACP, 1790 Broadway, New York 10019.

What's Happening

A little 'teacup' play

Deborah Kerr opened in "The Last Of Mrs. Cheyney" this week at the Mechanic Tehatre to a restrained and almost somber audience who gave the cast very polite applause at the end.

There were no famous Baltimore standing ovations, that greeted "The Wiz," or Carol Channing or even Jerry Lewis in his ill-fated pre-broadway offering.

The most popular screen version of "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney" was back in 1929 and starred Cyril Chadwick, Hedda Hopper, Norma Shearer and Basil Rathbone.

Griffith and Meyer in their book "The Movies" called this kind of film as well as Norma Shearer's "Private Lives" (1934), "Teacup Dramas." Fans complained back then, that nothing ever happened, the characters were left where you found them and what passed for action was cigarette-lighting, hand-kissing and eternal pouring and serving of tea.

The fact that "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney" is set in a n upper-class British drawing room with proper British sexual repression and snobbery makes it all the more boring.

The saving grace of the play is the warm, gracious, regal reading Miss Kerr gives to the part of Mrs. Chaney; the sumptuous sets designed by William Ritman and the costumes by Lewis Brown.

Ritman is currently represented on Broadway by two hits, "Chapter Two" and Deathtrap." Brown is costumer for the New York Shakespeare Festival and the Joffrey and New York City Ballets.

Miss Kerr's costumes are woth the price of admission. Simply elegant chiffons in tones of blue; a white glitter, billowy formal for the second act and a street dress in tones of nauve.

"The Last of Mrs. Cheyney" is the ninth stop on the national tour which began last August at the Kennedy Center in D.C. It comes to Baltimore from a record breaking stop of $122,000 in Orlando, Fla. and $83,000. in Fort Lauderdale.

At a press conference at the Belevedere Hotel, Deborah Kerr Monday night talked to the press in Victor Frenkil's 13th floor party room. Behind her was an imposing night scene of Baltimore with the harbor in the distrance, the nearby Washington Monument silhouetted and the dome of City Hall shining like a jewel.

Miss Kerr showed that she has a sense of humor as well as being charming and witty.

She was asked how she responded to critics who were harsh on her play. She said that critics vary and they like to pan plays because they feel it sells more copies of their newspapers.

She feels the "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney" was a comedy in manners and takes sharp digs at society that are just as true today as when first played in 1925.

Frederick Lonsdale's "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney" was first produced in 1925 and originally starred Gerald du Maurier, Dame May Whitty and Gladys Cooper.

The action of the play takes place in late summer, 1925. Action starts in the drawing room of Mrs. Cheyney's house at Goring-on-Thames and continues ten days later in Mrs. Ebley's country house.

Without giving away the plot, it's about jewel thieves in the bedrooms and living rooms of the very rich.

Starring opposite Miss Kerr are Monte Markham and Donal Donnelly doing very well with the little they have to work with. Markham, who recently starred on Boradway in "Same Time, Next Year," made his New York debut with an award-winning performance in the musical "Irene" and is well known to television audiences for his series "The Second Hundred Years," Mr. Deeds Gos TO TOWN," and "The New Perry Mason."

Monte Markham and Deborah Kerr in "The Last of Mrs. Chaney," now at Mechanic Theatre.

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Mother's Finest: a wild and funky band

By Frederick I. Douglass

Mother's Finest, the wild and funky band that is tearing up the land with the music on the "Mother Factor" album, will be rocking it to Baltimoreans this Friday night at Painters Mill Music Theatre on a star studded bill that also includes Rose Royce and Stargard.

While "Mother's Factor" is the latest album by Mother's Finest, it has taken the group a while to click because of its totally unique style which blends the throbbing, pulsating rhythms of hardcore funk with screaming guitar riffs that bring back memories of Jimi Hendrix and the so-called hard rock movement that dominated the music of the 1960s.

In other words, the group fits into a groove that was first explored by the now burned out Sly Stone.

Mother's Finest first broke bad on the scene about two years ago, first in Florida and then moving to Atlanta, Ga. which is now the group's headquarters. The first Mother's Finest album was wild and wooly, hitting the listener like a sonic boom. The world really wasn't quite ready for the wailing that went down on the LP "Another Mother Further" which contained a totally psychedelic version of "Mickey's Monkey" of Smoky Robinson and the Miracles fame.

But the group's potential flamed brightly on "Baby Love," a rollicking jam featuring a booming bass line, razor sharp guitar work and the wailing voice of Joyce Kennedy. Header rock was heard on the jam "Piece of the Rock" which gave the band's musicians a chance to jam on the keyboards and other instruments. Mother's Finest cooked out a taste on the ballad "Thank You for the Love," but for the most part continued the blitzkrieg approach to music on tunes like "Hard Rock Lover," "Dis Go Dis Way, Dis Go Dat Way," and the classic funk rock opus "Truth Ill Set You Free."

The release of "Mother Factor" brought Mother's Finest to the attention of a much broader audience because it contained the tune, "I Don't Wanna Come Back," one of the group's more danceable songs. All of a sudden, the sound of Mother's Finest was burning up the airwaves in Baltimore and Wshington and a few appearances at the Capitol Centre further solidified the group's growing popularity in the Baltimore - Washington area.

Another potential hit on the "Mother Factor" LP is "Can't Fight the Feeling" which has a right on time beat for doing the latest dances like the Freak and the Rock.

But the real nuggihgts of the album are the tunes that feature the ballad vocal stylings of Joyce Kennedy. While the lady croons up a storm on "Can't Fight the Feeling," she is even more spectacular when she smooths out the heat and scorches the words of her own composition "I Can't Believe," a ballad that the group would be wise to release as a single.

Joyce Kennedy's voice is cello mellow on this grooving ballad, and she can be heard to even greater advantage on Skip Scarborough's fantastic composition "Love Changes" which lets everybody know that the lady has a voice to rival Chaka Khan's and that is no exaggeration.

While Rose Royce and Stargard are better known groups, Mother's Finest just might steal the show at Painters Mill on Friday night with their frantic stage antics, expert instrumentation and wailing vocalizing.

TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson

Friday

Movie: "The Lost Man". Sidney Poitier is in fine form as a man on the run after committing robbery and murder. 4:00 - 5:30 p.m. - Channel 7.

Dinah: Guests today are Donny Osmond and his wife Debbie, Smokey Robinson, Los Angeles Dodger Steve Garvey and others. 4:00 - 5:30 p.m. - Channel 9.

Mike Douglas Co - host Dick Martin is joined by Michael Crane, singer Thelma Houston, Brenda Laury and Jesse White. 4:00 - 5:00 p.m. - Channel 13.

Different Strokes: The boys show off their new home to their old neighborhood friends and are accused of simply showing off. 8:00 - 8:30 p.m. - Channel 11.

Incredible Hulk: David seeks out the help of a psychiatrist, hoping her work in hypnotherapy can somehow suppress his Hulking alter ego. 8:00 - 11:59 p.m. - Channel 2.

American Music Awards: Some 30,000 listeners were polled for favorite rock, rock, soul and country performers and recordings. Donna Summer, Glen Campbell and Helen Reddy are the hosts. Appearances by Brown, Heatwave, Natalie Cole, Marvin Gaye, Isaac Hayes, Lou Rawls, Ted Pendergrass, Barry White others and many others. 9:00 - 11:00 p.m. - Channel 13.

Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders" on ABC Sunday Night Movie, Jan. 11.

Saturday

Fat Albert: The evils of narcotics are spelled out. 12:30 - 1:00 p.m. - Channel 2.

Soul Train: Guests today are Gene Chandler, the Duke of Earl and sophisticated Chic are featured. 1:30 - 2:30 p.m. - Channel 13.

Wide World of Sports: The World Individual Gymnastics Championships taken at Strasbourg, France. 3:00 - 6:30 p.m. - Channel 13.

White Shadow: A Chicano player seeks self esteem by quitting school to join a violent street gang. 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Channel 2.

Love Boat: A psychiatrist who believes in open marriage puts his theory and his wife to the test. Starring Ted Lange. 9:00 - 10:00 p.m. - Channel 13.

Sarah Vaughan From Wolf Trap: The music is all Gershwin in this concert with Sarah Vaughan. Backed by conductor Christian Badea and the National Symphony Orchestra. Sarah performs "Summertime", "It Ain't Necessarily So" and many more. 9:00 - 10:30 p.m. - Channel 26.

Hot City: Guests tonight are Sylvester and Evelyn "Champagne" King. Music includes "You Make Me Feel Real". 11:30 - 12:30 p.m. - Channel 2.

Sunday

Superstars: Distinguished athletes from the recent past test their aging muscles and funny bones in this sports - entertainment series, which opens its seventh season. Competitors in today's preliminary include baseball's Henry Aaron and Manny Wills, basketballs John Havlicek and Bob Pettit, former heavyweight champions Floyd Patterson and Ingemar Johanson and two time Olympic decathlon gold medalist Bob Mathias. 2:00 - 7:15 p.m. - Channel 13.

Wide World of Sports: In what's become something of a tradition, the Harlem Globetrotters are on hand to launch "Wide World's Sunday edition. The Globies are joined by country music stars including Charley Pride. 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. - Channel 13.

Movie: "The Day of the Dolphin", Fletcher based marine scientist whose talking dolphins become involved in a Presidential assassination plot. 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. - Channel 26.

Battlestar Galactica: The Galactica takes on a shipwrecked alien a political being who claims he can lead the Colonians to Earth. Part 1. 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Channel 2.

Movie: "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman". Cicely Tyson won an Emmy for this TV movie about a Southern black who is born in slavery and lives to see the civil rights movement of the 60's. 11:30 - 1:30 a.m. - Channel 2.

Movie: Billy Dee Williams is "Scott Joplin". This movie dramatizes the stormy career of the king of ragtime. Musical selections include his "Maple Leaf Rag" and "The Entertainer". Starring Clifton Davis. 11:30 - 1:30 a.m. - Channel 4.

Top Disco Records

1. Contact — Edwin Starr
2. Fly Away — Voyage
3. I Will Survive — Gloria Gaynor
4. Shake Your Groove Thing — Peaches and Herb
5. Le Freak — Chic
6. A Little Lovin' — The Ram
7. Cerrone IV — Cerrone
8. Y.M.C.A. — Village People
9. Chains/Cream Always Rises — Bionic Boogie

Top Jazz Albums

1. Touchdown — Bob James
2. Reed Seed — Grover Washington Jr.
3. Mr. Gone — Weather Report
4. Flame — Ronnie Laws
5. Children of Sanchez — Chuck Mangione
6. Inkmate Strangers — Tom Scott
7. All Fly Home — Al Jarreau
8. Secret Agent — Chick Corea
9. Secrets — Gil Scott Heron & Brian Jackson
10. We All Have A Star — Milton Fetter

Top R&B Albums

1. C'est Chic — Chic
2. The Best of Earth, Wind & Fire Vol. 1.
3. Motor Betty Affair — Parliament
4. Cheryl Lynn
5. Chaka Khan
6. The Man — Barry White
7. Rose Royce Strikes Again — Rose Royce
8. Get Down — Gene Chandler
9. Live and More — Donna Summer
10. Is It Still Good To Ya — Ashford & Simpson

Top R&B Singles

1. Le Freak — Chic
2. Got To Be Real — Cheryl Lynn
3. September — Earth, Wind & Fire
4. Get Down — Gene Chandler
5. I'm Every Woman — Chaka Khan
6. Love Don't Live here Anymore — Rose Royce
7. What You Won't Do For Love — Bobby Caldwell
8. Long Stroke — AOC Band
9. Aqua Boogie — Parliament
10. I Don't Know If It's Right — Evelyn Cahmpagne King

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