Navin Johnson (Steve Martin) is the only one in the family without rhythm so reads the copy put out by Universal pictures on "The Jerk."

Universal has a 'jerky' idea

BY Ida Peters

Some movie ideas are kooky! Some are far out, absurb! Universial's Christmas movie "The Jerk" not only has a "jerky" movie plot, but it's downright insulting.

Steve Martin plays Navin Johnson, white adopted son of a black sharecropper who leaves the family shack to make an independent life for himself. It's a rags to riches story and after all his adventures and misadventures ends up with his black family.

I thought the old black mammy type of pirture died back about World War II and Hollywood had come a long way, baby. T'ain't so.

Mabel King plays the mother and Richard Ward his father. Dick Anthony Williams is Taj. Grandma Johnson is Frances E. Williams; Cleotis Johnson, Lydia McGhee; Satch Johnson, Niko Denise Holmes; Pierre Johnson, Shawn Harris; Lisa Johnson, Susan Denise Harrison.

Bernadette Peters plays the love interest and Bill Macy plays the gas station owner, Carl Reiner plays himself The Celebrity.

As the movie opens Martin as the white adopted son of these sharecroppers asks himself "What do you think I am . . . some kind of jerk?"

Yes, is my answer.

As the family dines on cornbread, greens, hog maws and sweet potatoe pie, his mother tells themw; "Today is Navin's birthday and I cooked him up his favorite meal . . . tunafish salad on white bread with mayonnaise, a Tab and a couple of Twinkies . . ."

There are some folks who might think I'm unnecessarily sensitive but if you have any idea or notion about the history and agony of black families and the color question, you wouldn't think it funny either.

And those fans of Steve Martin who have followed his comedy routines "Comedy Is Not Pretty," "Let's Get Small" and "Wild and Crazy Guy" will think my comments are petty. Martin's book "Cruel Shoes" is their bag.

Maybe, I should be happy that so many black actors found work in "The Jerk." That's a good idea. However, I think that the story idea stinks!

Spinners save life of Viet Nam veteran

Atlantic recording group the Spinners have been primarily responsible for returning a positive outlook on life to a despondent veteran of the Viet Nam war.

The remarkable story began in July of 1978, when the Spinners played the Melody Fair near Buffalo, New York. Spinner Pervis Jackson received a phone call there from area resident Mark Smith, who was very depressed and was talking about committing suicide.

He had been wounded in Viet Nam and simply felt that life was no longer worth living. Pervis spoke to him at length, encouraging him to face his problems; he then invited him to come to the show.

Mark was introduced to the other members of the Spinners backstage and was their guest at the performance. Since then, Mark has regularly called Pervis to discuss his feelings and problems, with Pervis listening and giving help and advice.

In a letter written to Spinners manager Buddy Allen, Mr. Smith noted that "all the progress I amde in my treatment at the V.A. Hospital is due to the help and support that the Spinners have given me . . . I have tried to commit suicide on several occasions and because of the help and counseling that Pervis Jackson has given me I am able to live each day to the fullest and you know I don't have to cry anymore. I can laugh . . . I am just grateful that Pervis gave me an opportunity for success . . ."

Recently, when the Spinners appeared at Chicago's Mill Run Theatre, Mark was present at the show. He asked if he could present the group with a special plaque which he had prepared. In the dressing room, a very emotional scene took place when Mark read the inscription, which thanked the Spinners for saving his life and giving him a purpose to go on living.

The Spinners just taped The Mike Douglas Show, during which they called Mark Smith while on the air. Mark related the entire story to Mike Douglas, reiterating the fact that if it wasn't for the Spinners, he wouldn't be alive today. Also during the course of the program, the Spinners were presented with the Real People Award by Mr. Douglas. This marked the first time that an entertainer has won the award, which has been previously presented to humanitarians and politicians. The Spinners edition of The Mike Douglas Show will air January 23, 1980.

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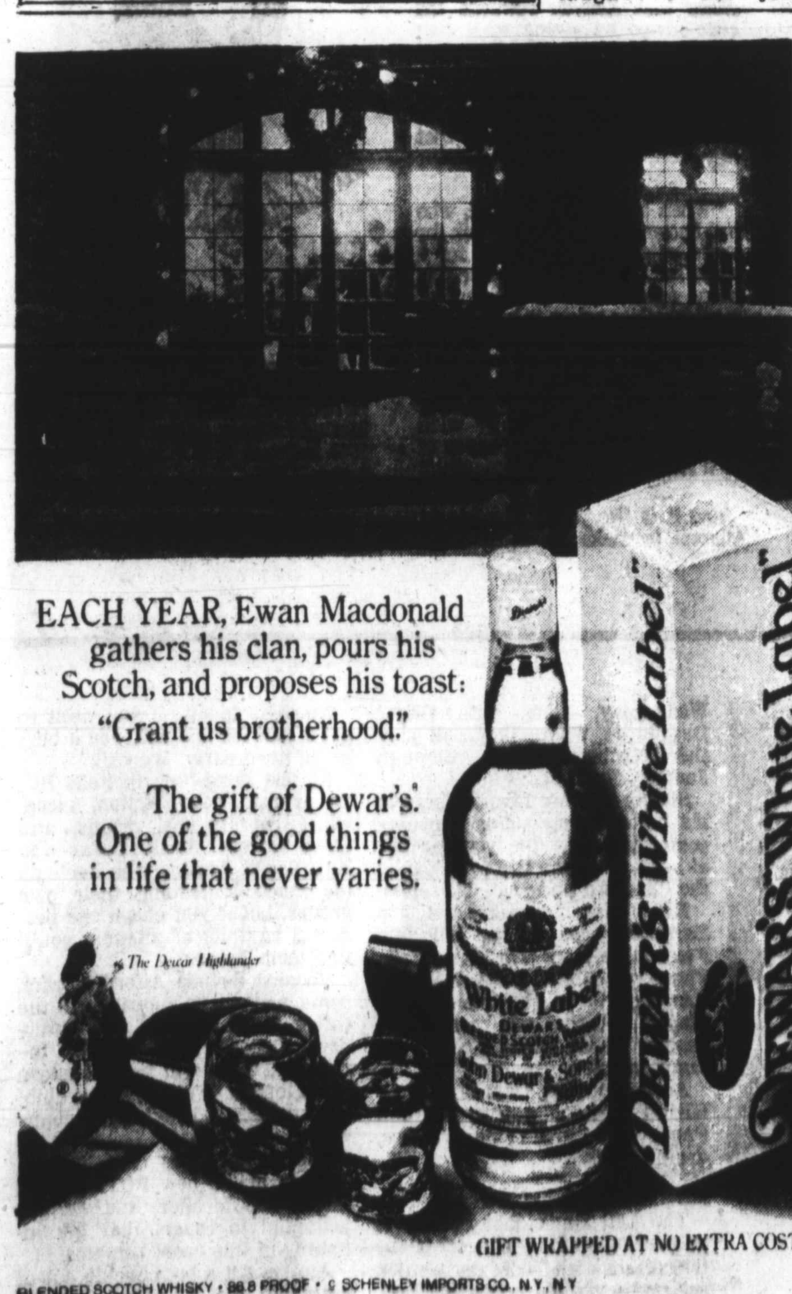


Ho-Ho-Ho from WKRP

Tim Reid is Santa Claus on "WKRP in Cincinnati," Monday, Dec. 17.

Calendar

Events for children

Mon., Dec. 17

Pimlico Branch: Preschool films — "Whistle for Willie" and "Green Eggs and Ham," 9:30 a.m.

St. Paul Street Center: Films — "Toccata for Toy Trains," "Any Old Port," "Dirty Work," "Corny Concerto," and "The Christmas Deer: A Legend Retold," 3 p.m.

Walbrook Branch: Holiday arts and crafts, 3 p.m. To register, please see children's librarian.

Herring Run Branch: Tree trimming, stories, carols, and surprises, 3:30 p.m.

Canton Center: Film — "A Christmas Carol with Mr. Magoo," 4 p.m.

Gillis Youth Choir

The Maryland Young Adult Choir and the Gillis Memorial Community Church Youth Choir will present a program of seasonal music at 7 p.m. on Thurs., Dec. 20, at the Pratt library's Pimlico branch, 5001 Park Heights Avenue. The concert is free.

Cloisters

Christmas is a time for dreams. And, "Tom Sawyer", a story which typifies the dreams of all youngsters, will be performed by The Arena Players on Sun., Dec. 16, 2:00 p.m., at The Cloisters Children's Museum.

"Tom Sawyer", an operetta, is the well-known story of a boy who makes his day-dreams a reality. It is a story for children, and adults, of all ages.

The Cloisters Children's Museum is open free to the public, weekdays, 10 - 4:30, and weekends from 12 - 4. The museum is located at 10440 Falls Road. Call 823 - 2550 for further information.

Western Night at Gatsby's

Brenda Alford is now appearing at Gatsby's every Friday and Saturday night.

This Friday, (tonight) Dec. 15 is Western Night. Attire will be Jeans and Western style clothing. Special feature is a Western Fashion Show and Bar - B - Que.

New Year's Eve at Gatsby's will feature Champagne and a full menu.

Ritz to celebrate

The Ritz Town Club — formerly The Playboy — is one year old.

General Manager — host, Dave Richeson and his partner, Odell Brock, Jr., are pulling out all the stops to say "thank you" to their members and guests who are making the dream of a black-owned supper club in downtown Baltimore, a reality.

The anniversary bash took off on Friday, Dec. 7 with a downstairs disco and a swinging show in the club's penthouse.

The Ritz will be anniversarying into the New Year, with a special show by the "Moments" on Christmas Day. They also went direct to Las Vegas to import Slappy White back to Baltimore as the comedy star of a three-pronged super star show.

Headlining with "Slappy" White, will be Miss Damita Jo and Carlos Johnson and his "Zone One" band. The show which is the highlight of the anniversary celebration, debuts Wednesday Dec. 19 and runs through New Year's Eve.

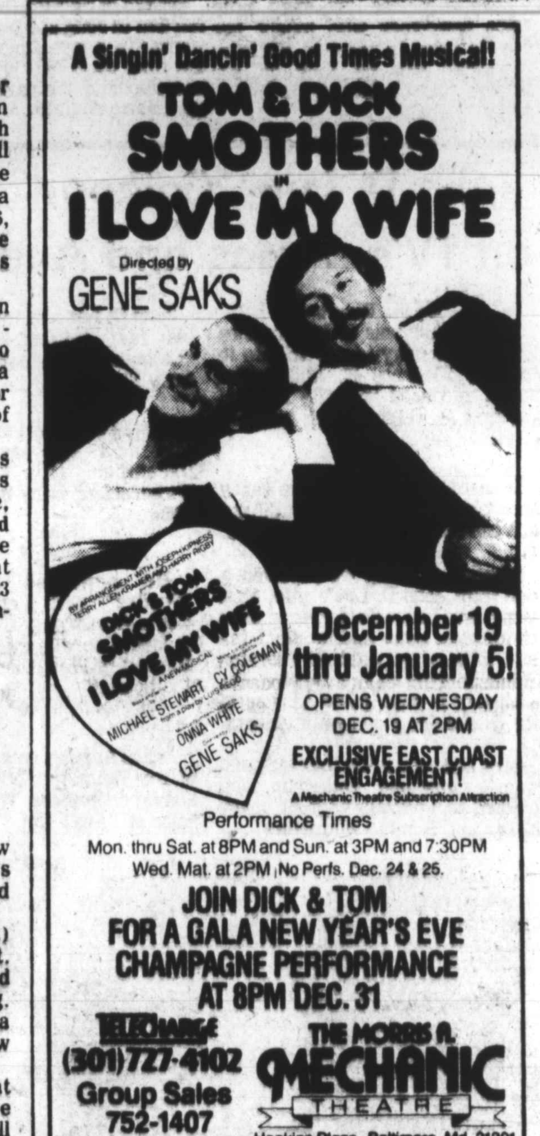
'Out of Clouds' for children

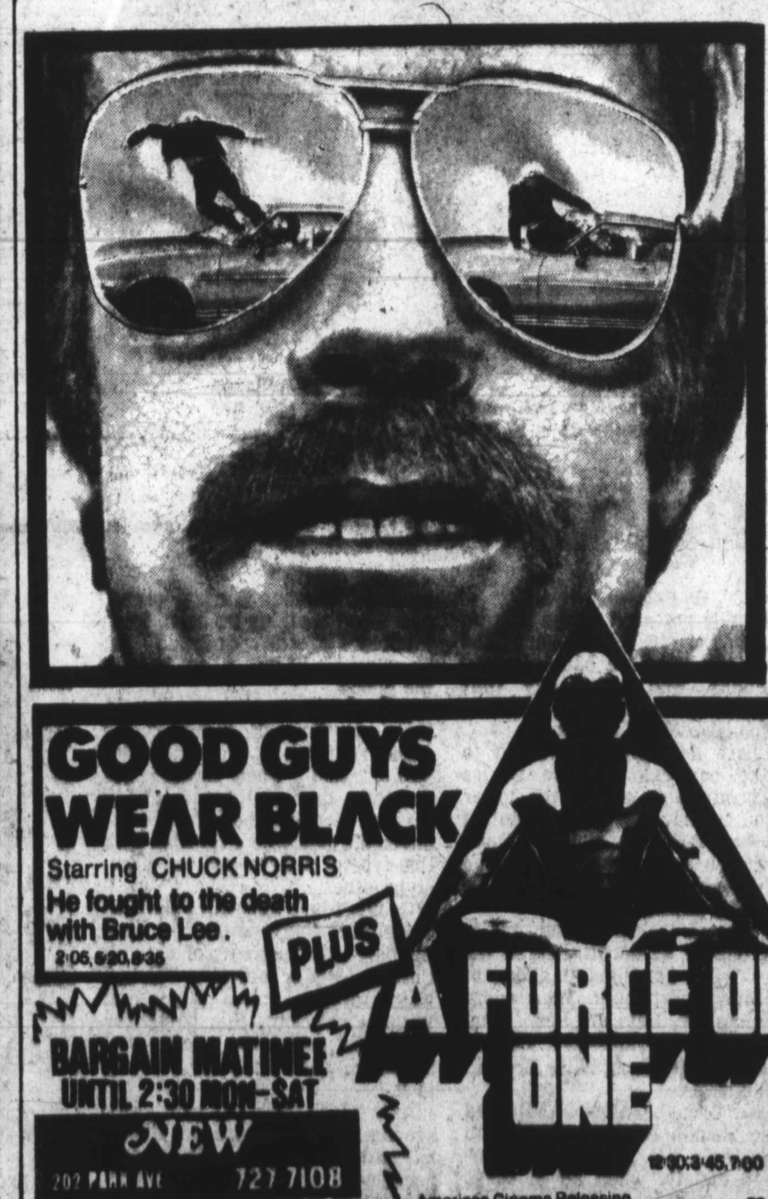
What do you do when men from outer space come to this panet to find a mysterious force called "holiday spirit?" How do you tell them what it is, and how can they take it back to their world?

These are the questions answered in "Out of the Clouds," a holiday play for children to be presented at Catonsville Community College, 800 South Rolling Road, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 14, 15, 16.

Performances will be at 7 p.m. each evening and at 2 p.m. on Friday and Saturday in the Barn Theatre. Each show will run about 45 minutes with a reception by the cast for the children to follow.

Admission for children and those accompanying them is free — a "holiday gift" from the Barnstormers of Catonsville Community College.





Meet...Jessica Williams

The lead singer for the group Arpeggio, Jessica Williams is now out on her own with an initial effort for Polydor - Harem Records, entitled "Queen of Fools."

Produced by the renowned Simon Soussan, "Queen of Fools" is a skilled R & B concoction, with an infectious beat and a silky smooth vocal performance by Ms. Williams. The first single is slated to be "Landslide" an irresistible dance tune with searing, soulful Jessica Williams vocals. It certainly looks like Simon Soussan's talented stable of artists has produced yet another winner in young Jessica Williams.

Along with the two other members of Arpeggio, Jerry Dalane and Fred Sawyer, Jessica Williams has extensive experience in the studio as a background singer in addition to being a gifted stage performer.

One of ten children, Jessica sang gospel with her family as a youngster, working as a background singer for H. B. Barnum after moving to Los Angeles in the early '70s. Jessica (also known as either Jessica Richardson or Jessica Rich) has sung behind Diana Ross on "Love Hangover," Thema Houston on "Don't Leave Me This Way," Marvin Gaye, Smokey Robinson, The Jackson Five, D. J. Rogers, Juliet Prowse, and, for the last two years, with Lainie Kazan.

"Lainie used to always ask me, 'How can you sing like that,?' " remembers Jessie. "I would tell her, a lot of pain, a lot of hunger and a lot of disappointment. All that fills you up with music."

Arpeggio's distinctive blend of voices and talent was brought together by producer Simon Sussan in November, 1978, who subsequently took the group into the recording studio.

They released their first first album, "Let The Music Play," shortly afterward, with its hit single, "Love and Desire." Sussan has long been one of the most successful and far-sighted disco producers ever, a pioneer who believed in the musical genre to the point of devoting his entire energies to producing artists like Patty Brooks, LeRoy Gomez of Santa Esmeralda, French Kiss, Lamar Stevens, Shalimar and his own Simon Orchestra, as well as Jessica Williams and Arpeggio.

Dave Richeson, co-owner of The Ritz presented Mrs. Santa with $50. They're celebrating their first anniversary with Slappy White and Miss Danita Jo.

Top R&B Singles

1 Do You Love What You Feel — Rufus and Chaka Khan
2 I Wanna Be Your Lover — Prince
3 Move Your Boogie Body — Bar-Kays
4 Rock With You — Michael Jackson
5 Ladies' Night — Kool & The Gang
6 Send One Your Love — Stevie Wonder
7 Still — Commodores
8 The Rapper's Delight — The Sugarhill Gang
9 Cruisin' — Smokey Robinson
10 Glide — Pleasure

Top Disco

1 Deputy of Love — Don Armando's 2nd Avenue Rhumba Band
2 No More Tears (Enough is Enough) — Donna Summers - Barbara Steisand
3 Wear It Out — Stargard
4 Don't Let Go — Isaac Hayes
5 Ooh, La, La - Harmony — Suzi Lane
6 The Second Time Around - Right In The Socket — Shalamar
7 I'll Tell You — Sergio Mendes
8 Love Massage - Good and Plenty Lover — Musique
9 Love Rush — Ann Margaret
10 Vertigo - Relight My Fire — Dan Hartman

Top R & B

1 Off The Wall — Michael Jackson
2 Masterjam — Rufus & Chaka
3 Ladies' Night — Kool and the Gang
4 Prince
5 Journey Through The Secret Life of Plants — Stevie Wonder
6 Injoy — Bar - Kays
7 Midnight Magic — Commodores
8 Identify Yourself — The O'Jays
9 On The Radio — Greatest Hits — Volume I & II — Donna Summer
10 Fire It Up — Rick James

Top Jazz Albums

1 One on One — Bob James & Earl Klugh
2 Angel of the Night — Angela Bofill
3 Rise — Herb Alpert
4 Street Life — Crusaders
5 A Taste For Passion — Jean Luc Ponty
6 Master of the Game — George Duke
7 8:30 — Weather Report
8 Water Sign — The Jeff Lorber Fusion
9 Street Beat — Tom Scott
10 American Garage — Pat Metheny Group

Jesse Walker's N.Y.

NEW YORK — Ashley A. Boone Jr., the top black executive in the movie business has resigned as president of 20th Century - Fox Distributing and Marketing division, effective Jan. 1. His position was one of the two top jobs in the company's motion picture business. Boone, 40, said he will establish an independent company to supervise the world - wide marketing and distribution of films, the new company to be named ABJ Enterprises and located in North Hollywood.

Cathy Chance, once Women's Editor of The Amsterdam News and a columnist now for the publication, has been appointed Director of Membership Development and Public Relations for the Studio Museum in Harlem. She last was Special Assistant for Urban Affairs at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee will read Christmas poems at the Special Festival Service of Carols and Poems, to be held Sunday, Dec. 16, at Harlem's St. Philip's Episcopal Church.

The New York Stars, leading the Woman's Pro Basketball League East, has six black members on this year's roster of 12. They include All - Pro Althea Gwyn, 6 - 2 center from Queens College; Janice Thomas, 5 - 3 guard from Long Island U.; Gail Marquis, 6 - 0 forward and silver medalist on the 1976 Olympic team; Denise Craig, 6 - 1 forward from Shaw University; Debbie Mason, 5 - 5, guard from Queens College, and Pearl Moore, 5 - 7 guard, from Francis Marion College, S.C.

Should Lenny Wilkins' champion Seattle Super Sonics continue their present pace, the club will set an NBA home attendance record. In their first 13 games, the Sonics have draw 265,331 fans for a 20,410 average. The league mark is the 19,269 average of the New York Knickerbockers for the 1972 - 73 season.

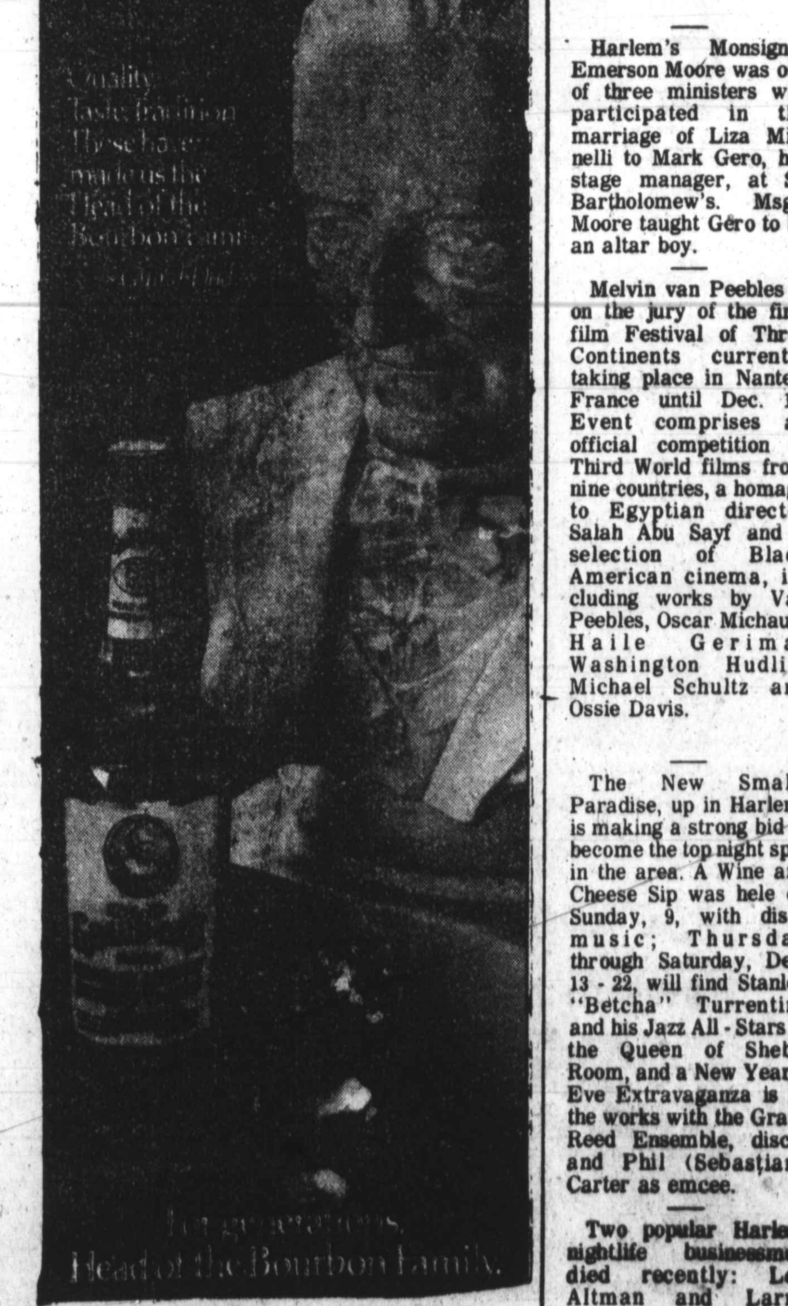
"The Fish That Saved Pittsburgh" is ranked 9th in the latest list of "50 Top - Grossing Films," playing 15 cities and grossing $1,904,070.

Harlem's Monsignor Emerson Moore was one of three ministers who participated in the marriage of Liza Minnelli to Mark Gero, her stage manager, at St. Bartholomew's. Msgr. Moore taught Gero to be an altar boy.

Melvin van Peebles is on the jury of the first film Festival of Three Continents currently taking place in Nantes, France until Dec. 11. Event comprises an official competition of Third World films from nine countries, a homage to Egyptian director Salah Abu Sayf and a selection of Black American cinema, including works by Van Peebles, Oscar Michaux, Haile Gerima, Washington Hudlin, Michael Schultz and Ossie Davis.

The New Smalls Paradise, up in Harlem, is making a strong bid to become the top night spot in the area. A Wine and Cheese Sip was hele on Sunday, 9, with disco music; Thursday through Saturday, Dec. 13 - 22, will find Stanley "Betcha" Turrentine and his Jazz All - Stars in the Queen of Sheba Room, and a New Year's Eve Extravaganza is in the works with the Grant Reed Ensemble, disco, and Phil (Sebastian) Carter as emcee.

Two popular Harlem nightlife businessmen died recently: Leo Altman and Larry Melville.



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TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson

Friday

Olympiad: U.S. sprinter Jesse Owens returns to Berlin, where he won four gold medals in the 1936 games. 8:00 - 9:00 p.m. - Ch. 5.

Merv Griffin: Tonight the Village People, Joseph Bottoms, and others are the guests, 9:00 - 10:00 p.m. - Ch. 5.

Soap Factory Disco: Host J. Paul Harris wlecomes Kool and the Gang and Cory Daye. 11:00 - 11:30 p.m. - Ch. 45.

Midnight Special: Joining the Village People, hosts, are Rupert Jones, the Spinners, and the Little Band. 1:00 - 2:30 a.m. - Ch. 11.

Saturday

Fat Albert: A girl has problems at school and with friends because of a hearing defect. 11:30 - 12:00 p.m. - Ch. 2.

Sneak Previews: Critics Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel show scenes from movies they're embarrassed to admit they've enjoyed, including "The Fury" and "Super Fly". 4:30 - 5:00 p.m. - Ch. 22 and 67.

Bear Who Slept Through Christmas; A cub who has never seen a Christmas because he's always been in hibernation. 8:00 - 8:30 p.m. - Ch. 2.

Merv. Griffin: Guests tonight are David Soul, Waylon Flowers and Madame, Ashford & Simpson. 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. - Ch. 5.

Story of the First Christmas Snow: Tale about a blind shepherd boy who, as Christmas approaches, longs for his first snowfall. 8:30 - 9:00 p.m. - Ch. 2.

NBA Basketball: The Bullets take on the Bulls at Chicago Stadium. 8:30 - 10:30 p.m. - Ch. 20.

Man Called Sloane: A maniacal architect's blueprint for the future is threatened when a common cat burglar steals an essential part of his secret weapon. Starring Ji - Tu Cumbuka and Vonetta McGee. 10:00 - 11:00 p.m. - Ch.

Sunday

NFL Football: The Baltimore Colts play the New York Giants in East Rutherford, N.J. 1:00 - 4:00 p.m. - Ch. 11.

American Lifestyle: This portrait of Louis Armstrong traces his life from his New Orleans childhood to his career as a master of jazz and swing music. 4:00 - 4:30 p.m. - Ch. 11.

Vonetta McGee in "Man Called Sloan," Sat.

Billy Dee Williams in "Christmas Lillie of the Field"

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