Commodores...coming...going

COMMODORES their "Midnight Magic" was tops in 1979

1979 was not a bad year!

By Ida Peters

Now that 1980 is here, we reflect that 1979 was not a bad year. This time last year we were involved with Howard Rollins, Herbert Rice and Mansoor Najee-ullah in Center Stage's "G.R. Point."

My last interview of 1979 was with Slappy White and Damita Jo who have been drawing rave reviews at the Ritz, the old Playboy Club. They have been held over thru this weekend.

—

Early in January 1979 principal photography was completed on Alex Haley's "Roots: The Next Generation" and was broadcast on ABC in seven two-hour segments Feb. 18-25, giving work to 225 actors, many of whom have not worked since.

There were 1,050 extras plus a crew of 115. They worked over 250,000 man hours. The production was budgeted at $15 million with $2 million spent on set contruction.

Fresh new faces gained stardom including Stan Shaw, Debbie Allen, Bever - Leigh Banfield, Lee Chamberlain, Roger Mosley.

Lola Falana was big news in early 1979 when it was announced that she would gross more than $2.5 million from her night club work mostly at the Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas where she will earn $100,000 a week for at least 16 weeks through 1981.

—

Chic was was the hottest record group last January with "Le Freak" as Top Pop Single' "Le Freak," Top R & B Single and "C'est Chic" Top R & B Album.

January 1980 "Do You Love What You Feel" by Rufus and Chaka Khan is Top R & B Single; "Masterjam" by Rufus and Chaka Khan is Top R & B Album. Chic's "Les Plus Grands Succes De Chic" is No. 100 with a bullet on Cashbox's chart.

—

February 1979 will always be tops in my memory book. Baltimore's own Dr. Eubie Blake came to Baltimore to celebrate the opening of his musical "Eubie" on stage at the Mechanic, and celebrate his 96th Brithday. He was born in Baltimore Feb. 7, 1883. The University of Maryland awarded him an Honorary Doctorate in November 1978.

We rejoiced while watching "Roots "II" that apother Baltimorean, Avon Long had the role of Chicken George. Another Baltimorean, Damon Evans had the key role of young Alex Haley and go to marry Debbie Allen.

By the time the Grammy Awards came around in late February, Donna Summer was voted the Best Female Vocal Performer; George Benson, A Taste of Honey, Earth, Wind and Fire all won Grammy's.

March 2 we ran out to the Rotunda and crunched cookies for the Girl Scouts. Portia Bedham crunched in 1979. Nashi McKenzie crunched for us for three years but she crunched out. She can't stand to look a cookie in the face.

The circus came to town and Vanessa Johnson and I followed the elephants from the train to the Civic Center. Young Morgan grad, Denise Brown was the fearless rider.

Late March we were in New York to preview Columbia Pictures "The China Syndrome" and got to talk to Jane Fonda, Michael Douglass and Jack Lemmon. All three have been nominated for Academy Awards.

The first week in April was something else. Miss Diana Ross brought her big show to the Civic Center; and thrilled 10,000 fans; Natalie Cole, Tavares and Sister Sledge came to Capital Center.

Gladys Knight and the Pips got back together and when they gave a sold out concert at the Aladdin in Las Vegas in April some clown shouted "Gladys, you can always get another husband, but there ain't no other Pips."

Worst film viewed in 1979 was "Uncle Joe Shannon" with Madge Sinclair and Burt Young. We viewed this turkey in an empty theatre on Reisterstown Road and was upset that I couldn't get my $3 back.

More 1979 in Tuesday's AFRO)

Thanks

By Ida Peters

It was almost a riot at the Mrs. Santa's office just before Christmas Eve. We sent our letters to almost 900 families telling them to come into our store and pick out good warm clothing and toys.

As fast as the store was stocked with bikes, new toys and used toys they went out. Various city agencies sent distressed persons to our office for food and we're glad to report we helped every one.

When Councilman Michael Mitchell and his brother Senator Clarence Mitchell along with Delegate Larry Young showed up in our office with 25 baskets we moved them right out to needy families.

Special thanks go to the AFRO Bookkeeping Staff headed by George Lottier who kept an accurate count of the money. More thanks to AFRO photographers Roman Hankewycz, Mark Gail and Vanessa Johnson who did a back-breaking job of taking some excellent pictures.

All clubs or organizations who wish a copy of their AFRO photo may pick them up in the Mrs. Santa Office after Wednesday, Jan. 2.

More thanks to Walter Shields AFRO Photo-Engraver who turned out our velouxs in record time. And to AFRO compositors headed by Rudolph Antoine, Leon Brown and Freddie Howard who kept the copy flowing and Make-Up men James Johnson, Sylvester Finney and Edward Mitchell.

Our job was made easy this year in getting cases typed thru the efforts of Executive Secretaries Mesdames Odessa Dyson, Carolyn Tutman and Gerlside Steele with help from Miss Brenda Loving.

Special Orchids to our Mrs. Santa Staff, Mrs. Vanessa Johnson and Miss Sharon Jordan. More Orchids to Executive Editor Ralph Matthews Jr., his staff and Miss Adrienne Manns, now off to Africa.

A special Orchid to John Oliver, AFRO president who kept the wheels turning to make the AFRO Mrs. Santa program a meaningful community service.

Photo by Roman Hankewycz

Mrs. Sheila Jessup of the Campfire Council donated toys, canned goods and clothing to Mrs. Santa this year.

Children's art classes at Museum

The Baltimore Museum of Art is offering a series of four Saturday studio classes for young people beginning on Jan. 19 and continuing through Feb. 9.

Entitled "Explorations into Soft Sculpture," the classes will explore the figure through soft forms and designs, using paintings and drawings from the Museum's collection as an inspiration. Children will create their own soft sculpture with a variety of materials, including fabric, paint, and found objects.

Jane Morais, who originated a course in the soft sculpture medium at The Maryland Institute, College of Art, and has given workshops and lectures on soft sculpture throughout the country, will conduct the class for 5 to 8 year olds.

The session for ages 9 to 12 will be conducted by Joyce Scott and will be derived from multi - media and ethnic works. A graduate of the Maryland Institute, College of Art, and the Institute Allende in San Miguel, Mexico, Ms. Scott has studied African and native American crafts at Haystack Mountain School of Crafts in Maine.

Classes will meet on Saturdays, January 19 and 26, and February 2 and 9. Ages 5 to 8 will meet from 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Ages 9 to 12 will meet from 1:30 to 3:30 P.M. Class fees are $16 for Museum members and $20 for non - members. To register, call 396 - 6369 or 396 - 6314.

Young audiences fights back!

Young Audiences, Inc., the non-profit cultural arts education program for children has decided not to take its financial reverses lying down but rather to put on a massive fund raising campaign in order to keep operating.

It would be ironic if, in the city where it was founded, it was forced to go out of business through no fault of its own but rather because of a few bad breaks. For the first time since its inception, Young Audiences is going out into the community, contacting Foundations, P.T.A.s, corporations and the general public asking for financial aid in order to continue giving school children throughout the State of Maryland, as well as in Baltimore City, exposure to all the performing arts, thus enriching their lives and, hopefully, building a vast audience for future cultural arts performers.

The Maryland Arts Council has allocated Young Audiences a

Continued on page 19

PENITENTIARY

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Broadway-bound comedy 'Filumena' at Mechanic

Joan Plowright and Frank Finlay will star in "Filumena," the London comedy hit directed by Franco Zeffirelli, which comes to the Mechanic Theatre beginning Tuesday, Jan. 8 for a three-week run prior to opening on Broadway. Both Miss Plowright and Mr. Finlay starred in the London production and Mr. Zeffirelli will repeat his direction for this engagement.

"Filumena," which plays through Jan. 26, is the Mechanic's sixth subscription attraction.

Written by Eduardo de Filippo, Italy's foremost living playwright, the comedy played for two years on London's West End, winning the "Best Play" award and "Best Comedy" award in 1978, and "Best Actress" award for Joan Plowright for her portrayal of the title role.

"Filumena" is that rare modern play with heart-to-heart appeal; a family play with characters you can laugh and cry with. Set in Naples, where passions run high and emotions are unbridled, the comedy tells of Filumena, a former whore, played by Joan Plowright, who has been living in sin with a man for 25 years. She now seeks to trick him into marriage and acceptance and support of her three grown-up illegitimate sons. The question that nags her volatile lover Domenico, played by Frank Finlay, is whether he is indeed the father of one of her sons. Laughter and the echo of tragedy weave through this comedy.

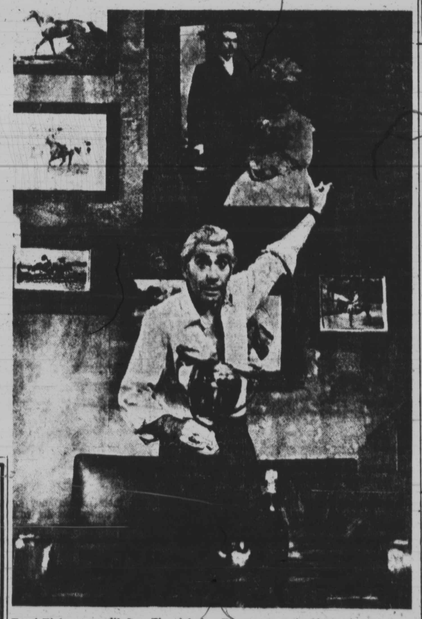
Joan Plowright is well remembered by Broadway audiences for her Tony Award-winning performance in "A Taste of Honey," as well as her roles in Ionesco's "The Chairs" and "The Lesson," and John Osborne's "The Entertainer," with Laurence Olivier.

Miss Plowright, who is married to Mr. Olivier, was first a member of the Old Vic Company in London, and then joined the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre to appear in a number of important contemporary plays by Miller, Ionesco, Osborne, Wesker, and Brecht.

She appears with the National Theatre of Great Britain in such plays as "St. Joan," "Uncle Vanya," "The Merchant of Venice," "The Three Sisters," "The Master Builder," and many others. Miss Plowright, incidentally, played opposite Frank Finlay in "Hobson's Choice" there as well. She's made a number of motion pictures, most recent of which was "Equus," and including "Saturday, Sunday, Monday," which also starred Frank Finlay and was directed by Franco Zeffirelli.

Frank Finlay is best known to American audiences for a series of spectacular television and film roles. On PBS-TV he starred in the title role "Casanova" and was the reboubtable Professor Heising who thwarted the "Dracula" of Louis Jourdan.

As Porthos in the film versions of "The Three Musketeers" and "The Four Musketeers," Mr. Finlay showed his mettle via word, deed, and sword. The actor began his career in English repertory, then landed in London at the Royal Court in many plays and logo to Laurence Olivier's floor in that celebrated production of "Othello." He later went to the National Theatre of Great



Frank Finlay stars with Joan Plowright in "Filumena" at the Mechanic, Jan. 8.

many times in London's West End. Mr. Finlay made his Broadway debut in 1958 in John Osborne's "Epitaph for George

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NEW

Weekend TV Watching

By Vanessa Johnson

FRIDAY

B.A.D. Cats: Cops who double as race-car drivers in their spare time assisted on the car-theft detail by a young policewoman and a reformed auto thief. Starring Jimmie Walker. 8:00-9:30 p.m.-Ch. 13.

—

Sensational, Wonderful, Wacky, '79's: A glance back at the people, events, music and trends of the last 10 years. That's how host Dick Clark describes this retrospective which recalls the 1970's with documentary footage, celebrity interviews, movie clips and concert highlights. Guests are Sherman Hemsley, Isabel Sanford, O.J. Simpson, Donna Summer and Earth, Wind & Fire and many others. 9:00-11:00 p.m.-Ch. 11.

—

Camera Three: A concert with blues singer Alberta Hunter who made her cabaret comeback in 1977 at the age of 82. 9:30-10:00 p.m.-Ch. 22 & 67.

SATURDAY

Fat Albert: Fat Albert and the gang befriend a handicapped boy. 11:30-12:00 p.m.-Ch. 2.

—

Hot Hero Sandwich: Guests today are Erik Estrada, Richard Pryor Gloria Steinem and Cheryl Tiegs. 12:00-1:00 p.m.-Ch. 4.

—

Soul Train: Guests today are Rick James and the Stone City Band sing "Fool on the Street" and

Rick James on Soul Train

"Love Gun". 3:30-4:30 p.m.-Ch. 11.

—

Sneak Previews: Reviews of "The Electric Horseman" with Robert Redford and Jane Fonda; the musical drama "All That Jazz; and the space epic "The Black Hole". 4:30-5:00 p.m.-Ch. 22 & 67.

—

Political Debate: The first head-to-head engagement in the 1980 Presidential campaign. Two weeks before the Iowa precinct caucuses, six Republican candidates for the GOP Presidential nomination are expected to debate domestic and foreign-policy issues at the Des Moines Civic Center. 8:30-10:30 p.m.-Chs. 2, 11, 13.

—

Saturday Night Live: Host O.J. Simpson and John Belushi are featured in a takeoff on "Saturday Night Fever" in a 1978 show. 11:30-1:00 a.m.-Ch. 11.

—

Movie: "The Organization, police detective Virgil Tibbs investigates the heist of $4million in heroin-Staring Sidney Poitier and Barbara McNair. 11:30-1:30 a.m.-Ch. 5.

SUNDAY

ABC News Closeup: "Teenage Turn-On, Drinking and Drugs", a 1977 report that includes comments from youths and a look at a Minneapolis drug-treatment center. 4:30-5:30 p.m.-Ch. 13.

—

Soundstage: The Temptations perform a medley of their hits and Billy Joel's "Just the Way You Are". 7:00-8:00 p.m.-Ch. 22 & 67.

—

Movie: Burt Reynolds quarterbacks a team of convicts in a no-holds barred game against prison guards in "The Longest Yard". 8:00-10:30 p.m. Ch. 13.

—

The Jeffersons: George is detained in a mental institution after he is mistaken for an inmate during his delivery rounds. 9:30-10:00 p.m.-Ch. 2.

—

Trapper John: Trapper receives an anonymous letter on his 10th anniversary as chief of surgery: "Big bomb in hospital. When it blows, everybody goes-especially you". Starring Robert Hooks. 10:00-11:00 p.m. Ch. 2.

Jesse Walker's N. Y.

The Studio Museum in Harlem is picking up the slack caused by school budget cuts that have stopped art instruction in many schools. The Studio has a cooperative school program for the public schools in the Harlem area with a high level of instruction and has expanded its program to Saturdays with films and story telling added to a traveling exhibition of children's art works will be seen at the Harlem State Office Building in June. The exhibit already has appeared at the Carver Savings and Loan Association and Countee Cullen Library.

—

The final performance of the ninth annual Community Holiday Festival co-sponsored by Con Edison and Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts will be held at Alice Tully Hall on Sunday, Jan. 6 at 2 p.m. "Queens a la Carte" will feature Theresa Merrit, star of Broadway's "The Wiz," performing with the Harold Ousley Jazz Ensemble and other guests artists. For tickets: Con Edison's Queens Division of Public Affairs, 4022 20 - 22 College Point Boulevard, College Point, N.Y. (212) 670 - 6050; Queens Council on the Arts, 161 - 04 Jamaica Avenue, Jamaica, N.Y. (212) 291 - 1100.

—

Writer Michael E. Earle, who received a $24,000 advance from Doubleday for his book "26 Children Revisited" says the book about what happened to 26 classmates who had an alternative education in a Harlem school will be completed next year sometime. And things are looking up, he says. "I have already been contacted regarding promotion from ABC - TV 20 - 20 to a made - for - TV project from the Lorimar Productions Company." The full title of the book is "26 Children Revisited — A Biographical Of A Black Generation."

Moviegoers will be participating in a nationwide balloting beginning January 9, 1980 for the All - American Movie Awards for Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor and Actress, Favorite Film Star, Best Film, etc. Not a single black is among the nominees. TV show with winners will be shown on NBC on Feb. 11.

—

R&B queen Ruth Brown who was tops in the '50s is now a TV hit in her first season as Leona, an outspoken school teacher in "Hello, Larry," an NBC - TV sitcom starring Mclean Stevenson as Larry Adler, a divorced disc jockey with two teenage daughters.

—

Gospel music is giving way to European - Style music in black churches because people have come to look on gospel songs as inferior, a seminar in Nashville, Tenn for black church musicians was told. "Educated, middle - class or bourgeois blacks who are prejudiced against their own music are our greatest problems," said Dr. Odell Hobbs, coordinator of fine arts at Virginia Union University in Richmond.

—

NYC's radio station WBLS / - FM has again topped the city's with the latest Arbitron rating with its disco and rock formula getting 7.1 percent share of the audience besting all - disco WKTU - FM which had 6.8 percent. Frankie Crocker is program director for WBLS. LaMar Renee it's most popular DJ.

The FCC has taken the first step toward possible action to force the television industry to increase "informationed" programming for children. It is considering five options proposed by its staff to increase the diversity of children's TV programming. A FCC report concluded that commercial TV has failed to meet its obligations to improve informational children's programming, as set forth in the FCC's 1974 policy statement on TV for children. Among the few informational shows now on TV are Children's Television Workshop's "Sesame Street" and ITT's "Big Blue Marble."

"Comin' Uptown" is Broadway's latest hit musical with Gregory Hines a new star as Scrooge in this adaptation of Charles Dicken's "A Christmas Carol." The musical by Phillip Rose, Peter Udella and Garry Sherman is at the Winter Garden and was been capitalized at $1,250,000 with $350,000 coming from Columbia Pictures, billed as an associate producer.

—

The Negro Ensemble Company is now presenting "Home", a three actor play by Samm - Art Williams. Starred are Clarke Peters, L. Scott Caldwell and Michelle Shay. At the St. Marks Playhouse.

—

The clipped African accent of Clarence Williams III as President Magoetla in the Broadway play "Night and Day" is something else. Also to be seen in this Maggie Smith starrer is Larry Riley, once a Leading Player in "Pippin's" first national tour and as Lonnie Paul in the ill - fated "A Broadway Musical."

—

Playwright and TV writer Charles Fuller, a native Philadelphian has good reason to prefer living in his hometown instead of New York of Hollywood. "My money goes a lot farther in Philadelphia," he grins.

—

RECOMMENDED READING: Bill Russell's "Second Wind: The Memoirs of an Opinionated Man" (co - authored by Taylor Branch, Random House). "To Smile in Autumn", by Gordon Parks (Norton); a successor to his other autobiographical volumes, "A Leaning Tree" and "A Choice of Weapons." It covers the years from 1944 to 1978.

Former Olympic gold medalist Lee Calhoun has been fired from his job as track coach at Yale University and is threatening to challenge the action in court. Calhoun served as head track and field coach at Grambling College for two years until 1969 when he went to Yale as an assistant coach.

—

Natalie Cole, working at the Copacabana on New Year's Eve replaced the Guy Lombardo Orchestra, conducted by the bandleader's nephew, Bill Lombardo, on this year's CBS - TV broadcast.

Baltimore Is Best Winners

Mayor William Donald Schaefer announced today the names of those to be recognized at the "Baltimore is Best" Awards Presentation, which will take place at Baltimore City College High School, 3220 the Alameda, on Thursday, Jan. 17, at 6:45 p.m. At 8:15 p.m. a Pops Concert by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra will be presented, William Henry Curry, conducting.

"Baltimore is Best" is a non - profit, fully volunteer program, initiated and run under the auspices of Mayor William Donald Schaefer. The full - time volunteer Director and Coordinator is Mrs. Floraine Applefield. Both Mayor Schaefer and Mrs. Applefield will be on hand for the event.

"The 'Baltimore is Best' Steering Committee" the Mayor explained "had the next - to - impossible task of choosing a small group of award winners from among hundreds of deserving nominees. Our City is blessed with many fine people who give of themselves to help others.

A highlight of the evening will be the special presentation of 'The Best of Baltimore's Best' award recognizing the most outstanding recipient of the Silver and Blue award 1979. The Awards Presentation is a public "thank you" and celebration of humanitarianism and good will."

Winners of the Silver and Blue Awards are:

The Covenant Guild, Inc., an organization of women dedicated to bettering the plight of the needy, be they ill, elderly or disadvantaged.

R.Adams Cowley, M.D., for his outstanding contributions to Baltimore's emergency medicine system, better known as the Shock Trauma Center.

Mary Dobkin, better known as "Aunt Mary", for her efforts in behalf of Baltimore youth of all races, religions and ethnic backgrounds.

Nathan Z. Goldberg, for originating Financial Expo '79 — The Baltimore All - Business Show and doing his best to promote business in Baltimore City.

The International Club of Maryland, Inc., a

Rev. Elinor D. Powell

volunteer organization which sponsors a "Right to Read" program, free English classes for the foreign born and provides an atmosphere in which to socialize.

Robert M. Jackson, Jr., for his 35 devoted years in the service of the Boy Scouts of America in the Baltimore area.

Deborah Lomax, for giving the gift of creative expression to those previously denied access to the arts by reason of disability.

Louise Mason, for an outstanding 38 year career in the Baltimore City Public Schools.

Rev. Elinor D. Powell, for her continuing interest in the welfare of Baltimore youth and family life.

"Spectacular Bid", three year old race horse, for bringing glory to Baltimore and promoting the City nationwide.

John T. Rugney, for identifying the symbolism of a progressive city and the "Pride of Baltimore", the ambassador ship, through promotion of Gleneagles products through the 50 states.

Elaine Taliaferro, for her extraordinary efforts on behalf of the safety and welfare of her neighbors, and her outstanding leadership in the Allendale community.

WBAL TV, for promoting Baltimore City through fund - raising, organization and innovative programming, such as the Donahue TV Show.

Earl Weaver, Manager of the Baltimore Orioles, for his leadership of the "best ever" Baltimore Birds.

Silver Award Winners are:

Maggi Baum, for her involvement as an exemplary Senior Citizen in a large variety of volunteer programs and organizations.

Harold F. Fennell, for working in a variety of ways to preserve and beautify Druid Hill Park.

Charles Fink, who though a disabled veteran, has worked without pay all year as a substitute teacher.

Kevin A. Mueller, an outstanding young citizen, for his volunteer work with the St. Francis Neighborhood Center and the Baltimore Streetcar Museum, Inc.

Joseph Ryan, for his community service, and especially his coordination of the annual Thanksgiving Day dinner for the needy and the lonely at Holy Cross Church.

Betty Seidel, for exemplifying the spirit of "Baltimore is Best" in everything she does, and particularly in her outstanding service to our Senior Citizens.

Milton J. Sloan, Baltimore's own "Mr. Parade," for his work with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and others to create wonderful holiday parades.

William Wilhelm, for initiating monthly meetings with community leaders and representatives of City agencies and opening his building and offering resources to improve the neighborhood, and for being a leader in the industry involvement in the community.

Silver and Blue Award winners will receive sterling silver and blue jewelry. Silver Award winners will receive sterling silver jewelry. In addition, the recipient of "The Best of Baltimore's Best" Golden Award will receive a piece of elegant gold jewelry in the shape of the letter "B".

—Audiences

Continued from page 18

challenge grant. If they can raise $9,000 from corporations, they will receive $3,000 from the state. But this will not be enough to keep the organization going as it hops to, helping finance concerts for those schools that are unable to pay, or can pay only a small amount, and giving employment to the more than 50 professional artists on their roster.

They feel it is now up to the public to decide whether or not it is important to expose children to opera, ballet, string and jazz quartets, ethnic dance, brass quintets and other like programs. If anyone has ever seen the pure delight and enjoyment brought to the children by the performers on the Young Audiences' roster, their fund raising drive will be a success.

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