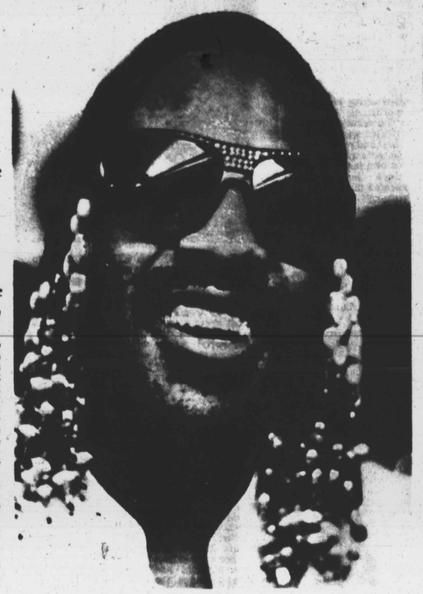
SHOWTIME

★ Theatre
★ Music
★ Art

The story of Stevie Wonder

How he got to 'Hotter Than July'

In 2 Parts He had three strikes against him... poor, black and blind



STEVIE WONDER

Mrs. Jennie Ruth Ford

A skinny little black boy, radiant with unlimited energy, sat in the living room of Ronnie White, member of The Miracles recording group. Shaking his head from side to side the 10 year old boy repeated the question asked of him, "Can I sing? Yeah, I'm bad. I'm better than Smokey"; the brash kid began to sing The Miracles recording of "Lonely Boy." Impressed by the little kid's talent, Ronnie set up a meeting for him with Brian Holland, a talent scout for Motown.

Twenty years have passed since Steviland Morris AKA Little Stevie Wonder was first brought to Motown. Reflecting on the past Stevie says, "singing for me was fun and I didn't realize that I was going through all the auditions. I was just having fun singing. When Berry Gordy, President of Motown, got a call to come hear me sing, he was eating a steak dinner. I often wonder, which was more worthy, the steak dinner or myself? I'm still trying to conclude what the answer would be for him."

Born on May 13, 1950 in Saginaw, Mich., Stephen Judkins Hardaway was the third of six children whose family later moved to Detroit. Although blind since birth, Stevie never looked upon his blindness as being a handicap. "I did what all the kids my age were doing. I played games, rode bikes and climbed trees." His first introduction into the music field came when he received a gift of a small six hole harmonica from his uncle and a set of toy drums for Christmas. A local Kiwanis Club replaced the toy drums with a set of real drums soon after. Stevie found that during the beginning stages of his career things were given to him, including his name "Little Stevie Wonder" which came from Motown. According to Steveia, Billie Jean Brown who worked at Motown in the A&R Department (Artist Relations) along with Lucy and Berry Gordy, tossed around different names for their new artist. Stevie Little Wonder, Little Stevie Wonder, Stevie The Little Wonder, were some of the suggestions. In the 1960s and 60s "Little" was an identifiable label attached to most protege's or teenager entertainers, such as "Little Willie John," "Little Anthony and the Imperials," this along with the type of music they selected for him all pointed towards the name "Little Stevie Wonder." "If they had waited a while longer they might have called me Knucklehead or something I used to get into a lot of trouble then. I loved to play jokes on people.

I knew the com-line numbers of everyone at Motown and would change my voice and say, 'This is Berry and I want you to get Stevie that tape recorder right way. He's a great new artist so it's o.k. to get him the tape recorder, he'll have it back in a few days. After they fell for this about three times and never got the tape recorder back, they gave me a recorder as a belated birthday present. I had turned 11 that May and received the tape recorder that September."

Stevie was signed with Motown for almost two years before his career launching recording "Fingertips I & II Live" took the public by storm. Stevie had recorded three singles and one album prior to "Fingertips." His first single, "I Call It Pretty Music But The Old People Call It The Blues," sold well locally and in the South. His second single, "Little Water Boy" written by Clarence Paul and himself didn't do too well. This was followed by a third single, "The Sign My Contract On Love," written by Lamont Dozier and it did well locally and regionally in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Originally, "Fingertips" was done on an album called "The Jazz Soul of Little Stevie." It featured Thomas "Bean" Bowles on flute, Marvin Gaye on drums and piano, Stevie played drums on one cut, Joe Messina, Robert White, James Jamerson on bass, Benny Benjamin on drums, Joe Hunter on piano and Earl Van Dyke on organ.

This gave the Motown musicians a chance to play like they did in the clubs of Detroit. "After recording "Fingertips" in the key of G, we decided to change the key to C and that's when the excitement started. Audience participation happened on the road with 'Everybody Say Yeah' and it stuck." "Fingertips I & II Live" was the first recording whose single and album became No. 1 simultaneously on Billboard Magazine's chart.

The summer of 1963 and the remainder of the year offered nothing but success for Little Stevie Wonder. There were many who felt that success at such a young age would spoil Little Stevie Wonder, "As far as a large ego is concerned, many people felt that I was getting too much too soon, but I didn't realize that it was all happening. I just enjoyed singing. Sometime when it was time for an interview or rehearsal, I asked for candy. I just wanted to go play or have a few cookies and candy, I didn't care about interviews. I wanted to do other things. That might have made some feel I was a brat, but not true: just a normal kid." As Little Stevie Wonder became more and more popular, more and more problems developed. Scholastically, things were not working out. "I could not keep up my regular studies at school as it became necessary to go on the road. There was no person qualified to tutor me in my studies while on tour. Because of this, my teachers told me that I should stop pursuing music and continue my education until I was 18 years old. They informed me that legally they could keep me in school until that time. I went in the bathroom and cried and prayed that God would allow me to remain in the industry, but I just knew it was impossible.

"One of my teachers told me that I had three strikes against me that must be considered. I was poor, black and blind. I should back down and try to forget about music, realistically, there would be nothing for an uneducated blind man to do but make rugs and pot holders." Stevie says that he is fortunate that God gave him the gift and made it possible for him to create. "Most important," says Stevie, "is that I was able to live in a family situation where I was loved and encouraged. If you lack any of those things, it can throw you off balance as to what it is to be or not."

(Continued in Tuesday's AFRO)

Philly Cream appearing tonight at The Ritz.

Philly Cream visits

By Ida Peters

What's Happening

A young, hot new vocal group, Philly Cream, appearing at the Ritz Club downtown came in town a week ago to visit local radio and TV shows and ended up here at the AFRO.

Their first album "Philly Cream" had a hot single "Motown Review" and their newest album on WMOT Records is "No Time Like Now". They have a single on the charts, "Cowboys To Girls" which was a hit back in the 1960s done by the Intruders.

The members of Philly Cream first met as part of a community youth group working with Philadelphia's Juvenile Delinquency Program under Sam Wilson, director. He organized a Jazz Drill Team with them and they appeared all over the East Coast.

Wilson found them natural entertainers so he formed them into a vocal group and helped them pursue a recording career.

Larry James from Fat Larry's Band arranged an audition with Alan Rubens president of WMOT Records and he signed them to a contract.

Valerie Lipford, 23, is lead vocal alto; Chris Bacon, 24 is lead tenor; Samuel Tunkins 27, is lead baritone, bass; and Ronald Bailey, 24 is baritone.

They travel with an 8-piece band which includes Warrick Jones, drums; Walter Pugh, guitar; Cornell Upchurch, piano; Julius Wilson, bass William McClellan, congos; Dwight Smith, vocals; Marlow Marshall, sax; and John Verheonia trumpet.

Sherwood Sledge, Gallery 409

Sherwood Sledge is appearing in concert tonight (Friday) Nov. 14 at Gallery 409, 409 N. Charles St. at 8 p.m.

He recently completed several concerts and tours with former noted arranger-conductor Quincy Jones. With Quincy he worked on the "Roots" ABC Television Production, and the "Roots" Album and was a featured solo on the "I Heard That" album recorded at A & M Records.

Sherwood has also performed at the Frontier and Sands Hotels in Las Vegas with such notables as Robert Goulet and Foster Brooks. Locally he has appeared with Diana Ross at Universal Amphitheatre and numerous other top entertainers at the Shrine Auditorium, Magic Mountain, the Anaheim Convention Center and the Long Beach Arena.

Between 1971-75 he toured overseas, primarily in the Far East and Mediterranean areas. His tours with Quincy Jones have had him perform in every major city of this country.

Sherwood is your modern day contemporary jazz vocalist and natural heir to Arthur Prysock, Herb Jeffries, and Billy Eckstein. He has his own style from a mellow balladeer to an electrifying, emotional performance. He has captured the blend of contemporary music with a jazz upbeat.

Quincy has stated very proudly that Sherwood was the highpoint of his show. Quincy is noted for his ability to spot and promote young talent and give them the opportunity to make it on their own.

Sherwood is a Baltimore native and embarked on a professional career of singing in 1970. He offers a fresh and original approach to the music of today. He is a fully versatile performer who delivers a display of showmanship we have not witnessed since the days of Bobby Darin.

Music Dance

M&M Concert Sunday

M & M PRODUCTIONS will present a concert Sunday, Nov. 14 at Gallery 409 at 5 p.m. Performers will be Joseph Eubanks, Junetta Jones, Kenneth Keeling, Elaine Kelly, Walter Lee, Henry Mays, Booker Rowe and Julius Tilghman.

Featured on the program will be "Sonata a Tre" by Giovanni Vitali and "Incantation and Dance" by William Grant Still.

SIGMA GAMMA RHO Sorority is sponsoring a musical program at Peabody Concert Hall on Sunday, Nov. 16 at 4 p.m.

Participants are three students at Peabody Conservatory — Judith Panil, soprano; Kenneth Witmer, baritone and John Young, pianist. The concert is free and open to the public.

THE AMERICAN STRING QUARTER, which recently returned from the highly successful European tour will launch the Peabody Conservatory of Music's Chamber Series on Tuesday, Nov. 14, at 8:15 p.m., in the Concert Hall.

The program will include Beethoven's "String Quartet in B flat Major", "Opus 130"; Haydn's "String Quartet, Opus 33, No. 3 "Bird," and Shostakovich's "String Quartet No. 7".

TONIGHT—Eva Anderson's Baltimore Dance Theatre performs Nov. 14-15-16 at the Dunbar Performing Arts Theatre. Melvin Cooper, Elana Williams, Jocelyn Edwards, Lorna Price, Yvette Shipley and Sharon Henderson.

Mary Williams plays Rose Spencer, owner of a New York house of prostitution in the Center Theatre production of "Splendid Rebels" weekends at the Community College of Baltimore's Liberty Heights campus.

Night Scene Seen

By Bob Matthews

Every now and again, you kinda take a step back to look at the scene so that you can make an evaluation of the state of the night club business.

Didn't do it alone this time, called up an old friend, Walter Carr, publisher of "The Nightlifer," and we chewed the fat for over an hour, assessing what is going on these days.

There was general agreement that inflation has really cut into the entertainment dollar, bar and club owners are now hard pressed to make ends meet.

Once upon a time, the receipts of the first part of the week were sufficient to pay the operating expenses, so that club owners could see a profit from the weekend business.

This is no longer the case. In all too many clubs with seven- day licenses, it takes the full week to cover expenses. This is why in a lot of instances, clubs which are licensed to stay open until one or two o'clock, have been closing early.

It costs more to provide heat, lights, pay the help and all the rest than the business warrants.

So, enterprising owners have adopted the "special nights" approach. The most successful—in some instances—are the "ladies only" nights, with male go-go dancers.

The undisputed king of the roost in this endeavor are the Tuesday nights at the International. It was the first, and remains the best known.

A lot of the business comes from young women who are bringing along their mothers or other relatives—just so they can have a night out on the town.

Henry Baker, over at The Closet, says his Monday ladies only nights have begun to build. He's quite happy with the way things are turning out.

In contrast, Brice's Hilltop Lounge has been trying a Wednesday night experiment with the ladies only concept, but say it is not working out as well as they would like.

Asked Brice if they contemplated a change—he quickly informed me that they planned to try it at least a couple more weeks. Incidentally, the weekend attraction at the lounge is the Mickey Fields group, with vocalist Shirley Fields.

Sometimes the spirit of supportiveness is beautiful to behold. Take the case of Tiger Lil, of the Chez Ja'mi out on Orleans St. Lil was in the hospital recently for surgery, and was released about a week ago.

In the true tradition of a service-oriented person, she showed up at her bar last Friday, ready to struggle through the work day.

Hah! As soon as she arrived, her friends set up a clamor and loudly banished Lil, demanding that she go back to bed until she was fully recuperated. In the meantime, her friends and daughter would keep things on even keel.

At the Left Bank Jazz Society this week, the Junior Cook-Bill Hardman quintet will be the featured attraction at The Famous from 5 to 9 p.m. this Sunday.

This will be another of those "don't miss" concerts, for these two giants are really smokers from the word go. You may remember hearing them when they played The Closet earlier this year, but this will be the first time in the LBJS setting in quite a while.

At long last, one of the local musicians is getting a real chance to demonstrate his prowess. Arnold Sterling will be the featured attraction at The Bandstand for the next three weeks.

This weekend, he will be accompanied by Reuben Brown on piano, and Tommy Cecil, bass. At preestime, the name of the drummer was unknown, but it will be first class all the way.

You might remember that the Scene chided Arnold recently for lapsing into lazy habits, and to his credit, he took the hint. Last outing we heard him, he was blowing like we knew he could.

Tonight (Friday), they'll broadcast live from The Bandstand, when Robert Ford will do his show from the club, featuring live entertainment. It can be heard on WBJC-FM, 91.5 beginning at 11 p.m.

Remember a week or so ago when we posed the question, why is the manager of The Garrison Lounge called Party? Well, only two people, not relatives immediately knew the answer.

Of course you did—but if you didn't, it's because her real name is "Persia." Naturally, I wasn't supposed to tell you all this, but when we first met her, she was Persia Juanita Ringgold of Gilmor St.

African Roots of Jazz at Art Museum

The performing arts company, African Roots of Jazz, will present a unique program of African Music and dance at the Baltimore Museum of Art, Sunday, Nov. 26 at 3 p.m.

Included in the program will be a rarely-seen African dance which is performed on stilts twenty feet in the air.

The program, which is free and open to the public, will be held in the Main Court of the Museum.

The Beverly-Hills - Hollywood NAACP 13th Annual Image Awards will be held Dec. 7 at the Hollywood Palladium with Sammy Davis Jr. as honorary chairman. He was the first honorary chairman and he will be honored for his 50th anniversary in show business.

Leroy Robinson is producing the show; Colette Wood, executive secretary of the branch is coordinator.

La Mama at Goucher

Teatre Loh, a visiting group from New York's LaMama Experimental Theater Company, will present several performances at the University of Maryland Baltimore County on Monday, Nov. 17.

At 2:30 p.m. there will be a demonstration of traditional Balinese-Javenese and Korean music and dance called "Clowns and Kings" in the Fine Arts Dance Studio (Room 317). At 8 p.m. there will be a performance titled "Tirai" in the gallery of the Fine Arts Building.

Teatre Loh, out of Java and Bali, is a startling new and unique dance theater. Developed and performed by actors, dancers musicians, and puppet players from Indonesia, Europe, and America, it fuses traditional Asian theater forms with contemporary concepts. It is a cross-cultural phenomenon which speaks through the strength of visual and musical imagery across every boundary line.

Its current production, "Tirai" is an explosive confrontation between conflicting Eastern and Western traditions Javanese-Balinese as well as original music. Julie Taymor, who is both an actress and visual artist, is the artistic director of Teatre Loh.

The performances at UMBC are being sponsored by the Theatre, Dance, and Music Departments and by the Baltimore International Theatre Festival. The work at LaMama has been sponsored by the International Communication Agency, the Ford Foundation, and the Asian Cultural Council.

Arena Stage
Presents In the Kreger
Ore Me' Time
An Evening of 1920's Black Vaudeville
Written and Directed by Vernel Bagneris
"A sassy, all-singing, all-dancing, all-shouting new musical!" —N.Y. Post
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Kreger Theatre 6th & Maine Ave., S.W. Washington, D.C.
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PRESENTS JAZZ WITH A LATIN-AMERICAN FLAVOR
CREATIVE ARTISTS MUSIC ENSEMBLE
Sixteen piece ensemble directed by Abdo-Rashid Yahya
Thursday, November 20, 8:00 p.m.
Dunbar Performing Arts Theatre, Orleans & Caroline Sts.
Donation: $3 / For information call 276-4646
Funding for this Urban Services Agency. Made possible by Grants from the Maryland State Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

$15,000
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and
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14

Mrs. Santa needs you!

M. Goldseker Co. presented $350. to AFRO's Mrs. Santa, Ida Peters, to help purchase food baskets for needy families. Above, David Eisenberg makes the presentation.

Continued from page 1

Vying for top place are The Outlaws, Dotson's, MTA Retreat Road Runners and Ramblers. Entertainment will be by Franky and the Spindles, The Amazing Josini, the Warehouse Comedy Squad, Chris Thomas, David Bey and Charles Hernandez. Admission is free to softball team members and their guests who participated in the Softball Contest in Druid Hill Park this past August.

Early bird contributions to the AFRO's Mrs. Santa which is used to purchase food baskets in bulk for needy families came this week from M. Goldseker Co., $350; the Avalon Club, Leroy Wilkins, chrm., $200; the Continentals, $100 and $100 from the Alpha Wives, Mrs. Doris Reese, president. Thanks also to Mrs. Margery Prout for $25. and Ellsworth Wilson for $10.

This year senior citizens and Youth Entitlement Workers in seven sites are crocheting 5,000 poinsettas for Mrs. Santa to be sold all over town and especially on Mrs. Santa Days, Dec. 6 and Dec. 13. Volunteers are needed for those days. Call 728-8205.

The Lampados Club of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Iota Epsilon Chapter are already selling Poinsettas at Towson State College. Also selling are men of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity under Dwight Gattis at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, and the men of Iota Phi Theta at Towson State.

The North East Baltimore Good Guys, Gary Carson, president, is holding a Variety Dinner, Saturday, Dec. 20 at Wilson Park Community Christian Church, 4629 York Road from 12 noon to 6 p.m. with proceeds going to AFRO's Mrs. Santa.

Mrs. Santa Needs You!

You are cordially invited to help the AFRO-AMERICAN's Mrs. Santa program. Mrs. Santa, AFRO Charities is a non-profit organization of the AFRO-AMERICAN Newspapers which collects funds to aid the less fortunate at Christmas.

Funds are used to purchase food baskets which include all the ingredients for a meal and staples to last at least two weeks. Names are supplied by our readers, city agencies and the Police Department.

This year senior citizens and volunteers have crocheted 6,000 red flowers to be sold in shopping centers and throughtout the city on Mrs. Santa Days, Dec. 6 and Dec. 13. We hope that clubs, organizations, businesses, churches and individuals will volunteer to sell the flowers for $1 to help us meet our goal of $20,000 and reach as many needy families as possible.

The AFRO's Mrs. Santa has opened a store at 624 N. Eutaw Street in the AFRO building to receive good, clean used clothes and toys. When you contribute to the store, we will contact our families so that they can select the things they need in their sizes.

Blankets needed for senior citizens

As the Christmas season grows near, we are again faced with the grim thought of many of our precious senior citizens being forgotten. This year, Division I of the Youthworks Program chose to fill the void a little by preparing special projects to benefit the senior citizens.

A number of community-based worksites have already initiated plans in getting the project underway. Elderly persons housed in various senior citizens complexes around Baltimore City will benefit at Christmas time from Project WINTER (Workaites Interested in the Needs of Their Elderly Residents).

Project WINTER is soliciting donations of unused blankets. These blankets, once repaired will be given to senior citizens as Christmas gifts.

With today's energy conservation efforts demanding that thermostats be set back at 68 degrees, very often the rooms in these large buildings are cold. These blankets may furnish the extra warmth needed to keep many an unfortunate person from becoming ill from the chill.

Call 396-5507 Monday through Friday.

Mrs. Santa's cases Rejected by my children

Case 1 — I am a 6-year-old woman with arthritis, hypertension, heart condition and diabetes. I have been relocated by my two grown children, couple all of my belongings. I hope you can send a food authority because I'm on a special diet and can only eat certain foods.

Case 2 — Please help me this year. I have a 6-year-old niece; her mother got into some trouble and is sentenced to three years in jail. My niece needs clothes, sweaters and winter coat. Last year I was able to buy two of us, my daughter, age 7 and myself. My daughter is in school. Please see that we get a basket for Christmas, and clothes and toys for the kids. Also in need for a little bed for my niece.

Case 3 — I am a mother with a low income of $270 a month and have 3 children. I can barely buy dishwasher liquid. I have low blood and a nervous condition and can not afford to work. I don't have enough money for gas and electric bills. My children are 7, 5 and 17. Sometimes I cannot send my children to school because I don't have enough money to buy clothes for them.

DICK GRITTEY PRODUCTIONS & JERRY WEINTRAUB PRESENT
Stevie Wonder's Hotter Than July
Musical Picnic
LIVE IN CONCERT
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 29TH
8:00 P.M.
All Seats Reserved $10.50 & $12.50
Tickets
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Gala Awards Party For Participants in the
AFRO's Mrs. Santa Softball Marathon
Sat., Nov. 15, 4-6 p.m.
20 Grand Club
Taurus Room
5611 Bowley's Lane
Off Sinclair Lane
•Certificates for all team members participating
•Trophies for teams turning in the most money
•Music by Franky and the Spindles
•The Amazing Josini
•The Warehouse Comedy Squad
•Chris Thomas — The man with the many voices from Washington, D.C.
•David Bey of Broadway Dance Co.
•Priority One Band and Singers
Hosts: Raymer T. Banks
Larry Everett, WWIN
AFRO's Mrs. Santa, Ida Peters
Drag or Stag Cash Bar
RSVP—Raymer Banks 539-0132
Ida Peters 728-8205
Please! Help us make the Softball Marathon Goal of $2,000.

NOV