Concerts

Jazz Ensemble Festival

Jazz ensembles from Baltimore City Public Schools will be showcased during a Public School Jazz Ensemble festival on February 21 at Dunbar High School. The concert begins at 2 p.m. Admission is free. Call 367-4292 for details.

Auditions

Young Soloists' Wanted

Applications are being accepted for the Young Soloists Auditions for students age 11-15 studying piano, strings, woodwind and brass at Catonsville Community College. April 27 is the cut-off date and a concert will be held on May 23 and 24. You must reside in AA, Baltimore, Carroll, Howard and Montgomery Counties and Baltimore City. Cash prizes will be awarded. For audition rules and an application form call 455-4429 or 455-4149.

Jazz and Big Band

The Maryland Center for Creative Music will hold auditions for a jazz big band workshop and performance on Saturday, February 21 at the Baltimore School for the Arts. The time is 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Call 944-6512 or 467-4001 for details.

Annapolis Arts Festival

Application forms are available for those interested in performing on the stage at the Annapolis Arts Festival scheduled for June 19-21. Deadline is February 20 for performers and for those who wish to rent exhibit space, the deadline is March 9. Call 267-7922 for more information.

Family Theatre Group

The Family Theatre Group is holding auditions on February 21 at 806 Park Ave. The play scheduled is called "Alice in Blunderland." Needed are 25 men, women and children and two pianists.

'The Sistuhs'

The Morgan State University Theatre Department will hold auditions for "The Sistuhs' by Saundra Sharp (a play with music) on Monday and Tuesday, February 23 and 24 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. in Murphy Auditorium. Actors, singers and dancers are needed. Prepare an upbeat and a ballad. For more information call Shirley Basfield Dunlap at 444-3665 or 444-3625.

Exhibits

'Black Women: Achievement Against the Odds'

The Montpelier Cultural Arts Center is presenting the historical exhibition "Black Women: Achievement Against the Odds," that was developed in 1975 by the Smithsonian's Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Harriett Tubman, Maggie Lena Walker, Bessie Smith and Leslie Allen are among the women highlighted. The exhibit runs until February 28. Call 953-1993 for more information and directions.

Films

Enoch Pratt Free Library

"King: Montgomery to Memphis," a feature-length documentary on the career of the civil rights leader, will be shown at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 23, at the Edmondson Avenue branch, 4330 Edmondson Avenue.

At 1 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 25, the Waverly branch, 400 East 33rd Street, will present "The Long Straight," about a journey by train across Australia from Sydney to Perth.

"Paul Robeson: The Tallest Tree in the Forest" will be the feature attraction Tuesday, February 26, at 3:30 p.m. at the Northwood branch, 4420 Loch Raven Boulevard.

Free. Details: 396-5494.

Special Events

Skate Party

"The Pack" is sponsoring a Skate Party at Shake and Bake, 1601 Pennsylvania Ave. on Friday, February 27 starting at 11 p.m. Cash prizes will be awarded for the sexiest outfit. Tickets are $4 in advance and $4.50 at the door. Call 362-8570 or 624-0569 for details.

Fan Appreciation Day

The Baltimore Wheelchair Athletic Club will hold a Fan Appreciation Day on Sunday, February 22 at 1 p.m. at the University of Baltimore Gym. Tickets are $2. Call 539-3502 for more information.

Disco Cabaret Fundraiser

A-Live Productions is presenting a fundraiser and talent search for the Aggressive Drive Against Poverty's Traditions (ADAPT) on Friday, February 20 starting at 7 p.m. at the 5th Regiment Armory. Tickets are $10 in advance and $12 at the door. Call 792-9655 or 792-9691 for details.

Events for Children

Enoch Pratt Library

Friday, February 20

Brooklyn Branch, 300 East Patapsco Avenue: Films — "Animal Lover," "Ferdinand the Bull," and "Jumping," 10 a.m.

Saturday, February 21

Central Pratt Library, Wheeler Auditorium, 400 Cathedral Street: Films — "Luke Was There" and "The Seven Wishes of Joanna Peabody," 11 a.m.

John Taylor Workshops

Dancing, singing and creative movement are some of the activities that will happen at John Taylor's Workshops held every Saturday in February at 2 p.m. at the Cloisters Children's Museum. Admission is $2 for adults and children over 2; $1.50 for senior citizens and free for all members. For details call 823-2550.

Drama Classes

Creative Drama and Puppetry classes will be held through March 28 for boys and girls ages 5 through 15. Classes are sponsored by the Pumpkin Theatre and will be held on Friday after-

Continued on page 4

On the Cover.....George Howard and Bob James bring mellow jazz to Baltimore

By Frederick I. Douglass

George Howard, the saxophonist whose album "A Nice Place to Be" is attracting music lovers of all convictions and complexions, and Bob James," the keyboard whiz whose album "Obsession" ranks high on the charts, will be squaring off this coming Tuesday (February 24) at the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall.

While Bob James is receiving top billing at this concert, I predict that George Howard will steal the show with his fluid improvisational skills and his laid back attack on the sax which is reminiscent of King Curtis with a dash of the more visceral approaches of Junior Walker and Maceo Parker.

Refusing to be categorized, George Howard says "I don't like the terms pop, R&B, or jazz...I just play music. People can call it whatever they want."

Apparently, George Howard's smooth blend of jazz and top-40 musical idioms is appealing to the ears of a myriad of people because all three of his albums— "Dancing in the Sun" which was released in 1985, "Love Will Follow" which was one on the first mellow grooves to hit the market in 1986, and "A Nice Place to Be" are selling briskly at record stores in the Baltimore-Washington area and ranking high on jazz and popular sales charts.

George Howard began classical music training at the age of six and switched to bassoon two years later. Progressing rapidly on his chosen instrument, he studied woodwinds with the highly acclaimed Shirley Curtis of the Philadelphia Orchestra and participated in the prestigious Settlement School of Music.

By the time he was fifteen years old, Howard was being called for gigs with Blue Magic, First Choice plus Harold Melvin and the Bluenotes. His first major break came in 1979 when saxophonist Grover Washington, Jr., hired Howard to work with his touring band.

Howard's latest album "A Nice Place to Be" clearly demonstrates his evolving prowess as an instrumentalist and introduces yet another dimension of his talents—the man can be heard crooning with considerable aplomb on tunes entitled "No, No," "Let's Live in Harmony" and "Pretty Face."

Hopefully, someone will pull Bob James' coattails to the fact that he had better be prepared to throw down, jam, take care of business and otherwise display ample professionalism when he takes over the stage this coming Tuesday evening. The stage will definitely be hot from the performance of the "warm-up" act, so Bob James is going to have to work hard to maintain the mellow, progressive groove that will be established by George Howard.

Bob James, of course, is no slouch when it comes to musicianship. Presently, Bob is riding high on the charts with his album "Obsession" which features the keyboard wizard whizzing through seven variously paced tunes.

During 1986, James also recorded a popular album entitled "Double Vision" along with the frenetic saxophonist David Sanborn which proved that the keyboard player is at his best when he has works in tandem with another "star," particularly a strong soloist in the woodwind or brass area.

Bob James' career as a jazz musician got its first major boost in 1962 when he was a student at the University of Michigan and put together a trio to perform at the Notre Dame Jazz Festival where Quincy Jones was one of the adjudicators. Quincy was favorably impressed by James and initiated contacts for him which led to a recording contract with Mercury records.

"Quincy has been, directly and indirectly responsible for most of the good things that have happened to me in the music business" says James. "He has recommended me for all sorts of things at the time when I needed that kind of introduction, and because he is so highly thought of in this business, his recommendation has always done wonders. We're very close friends and I'll always be grateful for what he's done for me."

Bob James spent four years as the musical director for Sarah Vaughn and went on to enhance his growing reputation as an arranger by working on impressive albums for Dionne Warwick, Roberta Flack, Aretha Franklin and Morgana King.

Quincy Jones came into Bob James' life again and facilitated his getting employment with Creed Taylor who was producing his "Walking in Space" album. James worked with Taylor after his CTI label spun off from A&M Records and worked with a variety of artists including Hubert Laws, Eric Gale, Stanley Turrentine, Ron Carter, Johnny Hammond, Hank Crawford and Grover Washington, Jr.

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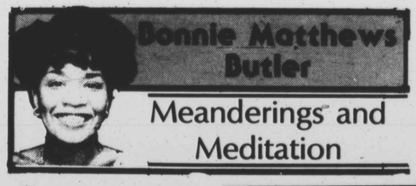

Donnie Matthews Butler

Meanderings and Meditation

The concert scene was jumping last weekend. **Dennis Edwards,** formerly and presently of **The Temptations** and **Freddie Jackson,** the hottest ladykiller around, were both in town to do what they do best.

But let's start with **Dennis Edwards.**

The show opened with a group from Washington, D.C. called **Coast to Coast.** What was interesting to note about this group was that there were two singers, **Rocky Whittaker** and **Robert Finney** and a keyboard player, **Terry Sinsny.** Period.

Terry had the task of being the drummer, the keyboardist and the rhythm section all rolled into one. (He used a synthesizer and drum machine). This made for some good music and the group was superb but there's nothing like a live band. We'll have more on this group at a later date.

Then it was time for **Dennis Edwards** to take the stage and take the stage he did. Dennis was backed by a four piece band and two backup singers.

For those of you who may not remember, Dennis replaced **David Ruffin** in **The Temptations** in 1968 and performed with them for 17 years.

Dennis gave an outstanding show and he is in fine voice. He will, however, have to lose some weight before he embarks on a tour with the Temps since, one of the things they are known for is their choreography and he will have to be able to keep up.

We wish him loads of luck however, and anxiously await his return to Baltimore with the group he helped make famous.

Dennis Edwards sang his heart out at his recent concert. (Photo by Donnie Green)

The **Freddie Jackson** "Tasty Love" show was a sold out affair for both performances.

The show opened with jazz-oriented saxophonist **Najee.** This man can "blow." While he didn't get alot of time to demonstrate what he could do, the short time he was on the stage proved to one and for all that this man is destined for stardom.

Ray, Goodman and Brown graced the stage next. Known for such hits as "Special Lady" and "Inside of You", this talented group didn't disappoint.

Then it was time for the star of the show, **Freddie Jackson.** Freddie opened with a l-o-n-g version of "Good Morning Heartache." It was so long that you wanted to shout out for him to get on with the next tune. The ladies in the audience, however, didn't care how long the tune was for they were there to see him and that was all that mattered.

Freddie asked a lady in the audience to come on stage so he could sing to her. While the one he chose was making her way to the stage, another woman wanted the opportunity to have Freddie sing to her and insisted that she be allowed to come on stage also.

Being the gentleman that he is, Freddie allowed both of the ladies on stage and **Wanda Spellman** and **Inerta Rice** got their dreams answered. They giggled and swooned the whole time.

Freddie Jackson wowed the audience during his recent performence at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. (Photo by Donnie Green)

We were a bit disappointed that Freddie talked more than he sang but we were told that he was a little under the weather. But no one seemed to mind and Freddie left the stage with the crowd begging for more.

Now for other happenings.

As reported in a previous column, **Millie Jackson** is coming to town. It won't be in February as stated but on March 22 at 7 p.m. at the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. She'll be appearing with **B.B. King** and **Bobby "Blue" Bland.** Tickets are $20. Call 783-8000 for details.

* * *

Before I close this column, I want to thank that nice Arrow Cab driver, **Pierre George** for his kindness. It's nice to know that there are some caring people in the world and this man is surely one of them. Thanks.

Carl Matthews

SOUNDS

Bonnie Matthews Butler welcomes Freddie Jackson to Baltimore as he shows off the official proclamation presented to him by Councilman Nathaniel McFadden.

RAY, GOODMAN AND BROWN "Take It To The Limit" (EMI America)

Harry Ray, Al Goodman and Billy Brown have returned to the top ten on the black singles charts with "Take It To The Limit," from their new album of the same name.

The guys have been together for 19 years. As the Moments, they hit the charts with such classic singles as "Love On A Two-Way Street" (1970), "Sexy Mama" and "Look At Me (I'm In Love)." As Ray, Goodman And Brown, they had such popular singles as "Special Lady" and "Happy Anniversary." "Who's Gonna Make The First Move," released on the Panoramic label, was one of their most recent singles.

The ballads on their new album continue in the tradition of Ray, Goodman And Brown. Don't look for synth-rock or hip-hop from these boys. A Ray, Goodman And Brown album is for those who want smoothly blended vocal harmonies that are "warm in a non-threatening way." And the album's opening track, which features a saxophone solo by Najee, is a perfect example of the sort of thing this trio is about.

Unfortunately, some of the instrumental tracks, dominated by William Rhinehart's synthesizer and drum programming, are indistinguishable from the sort of instrumentation that appears on records by Freddie Jackson or any of a dozen other artists. It is the boys' experience and talent that saves such tunes as "Celebrate Our Love" from being simply forgettable pop ditties. And for those who loved "Special Lady," the boys have a treat for you: "We've Got Tonight" (not the Bob Seger hit).

Other cuts: "(Baby) Let's Make Love Tonight," "Good Love," "Why Must I Wait," "Waiting For Dawn," "Someone's Missing Your Love."

NAJEE "Najee's Theme" (EMI America)

This is the debut album by sax player Najee, which includes his recent single, "Sweet Love."

Born and raised in New York City, Najee has worked in the studio with such artists as Melba Moore, Kashif, Lillo Thomas and George Benson. Najee also played sax on Ray, Goodman And Brown's latest album.

Najee's album kicks off with the upbeat, danceable "Feels So Good To Me," which is mostly instrumental with a few vocals thrown in. Najee's sax work (some jazz influence here) carries the tune, which is simple in structure and is obviously designed simply to put people in a good mood.

"Can't Hide Love," while arranged in a somewhat predictable fashion, is a good example of the versatility of Najee, as he breathes life into an old Earth, Wind And Fire hit. However, I think the occasional vocal that appears here detracts from the performance. This should have been completely instrumental, the way I see it.

"Sweet Love," which was a hit for Anita Baker, seems to be a tune tailor-made for Najee and the crew, judging from this performance. I would have liked to hear a solo done on an instrument other than a sax on this track, though.

On my review copy, someone goofed on the label. The fifth cut on side one is listed as "We Are Family" on the album cover, but it's listed as "We're Still Family" on the label.

Other cuts: "Najee's Theme," "For The Love Of You," "Petcha Don't Know," "Mysterious."