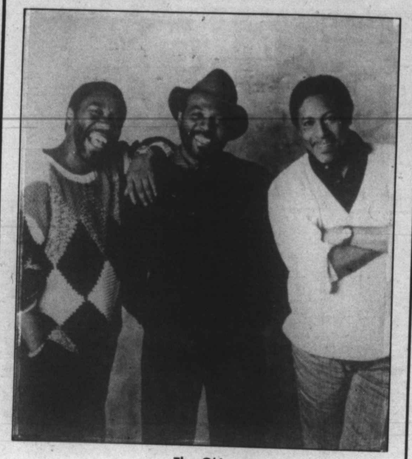
Weekend Treats



The O'Jays

The O'Jays along with Millie Jackson will appear Saturday, Oct. 3 for two shows — 8:30 & 11:00 p.m. at Constitution Hall, Washington, D.C.

Millie Jackson

Special Events

Class International presents a Stay-In-School Celebration on Sunday, Oct. 4, 1987, 7:00 p.m. at Constitution Hall, featuring Washington area youth, Vanessa Bell Armstrong and special artists, the Grammy Award Winning Winans. A portion of proceeds will be used to establish the Class International Scholarship Fund for academic year 1988-89, to be awarded in Spring 1988. For further information call 939-8520.

* * *

The American Sampler Series at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History begins an entire season of performance and lecture/demonstrations with "Living Out: A Black American Hymn - Singing Tradition."

The program, featuring pastor, singer, teacher and songwriter Dr. C. J. Johnson, will be presented on Friday, Oct. 2 at 8:00 p.m. in the museum's Hall of Musical Instruments (third floor).

* * *

The 4th Annual Black Memorabilia Extravaganza Show and Sale returns to Armory Place in Silver Spring October 2, 3 and 4. The expanded program includes an opening-night tribute to well-known black artists and a how-to seminar covering every aspect of black memorabilia. For more information call 842-4170.

* * *

Enjoy a weekend where the past meets the present at the 21st annual FELLS POINT FUN FESTIVAL sponsored by the Presbyterian Society of Federal Hill and Fells Point, Baltimore, MD. Located at the foot of Broadway, the festival will be held from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, October 3 and 4. In its best tradition the festival promises to inspre your imagination, fill your stomach, satisfy your hearing, and generally tickle your funny bone.

Celebrate the present and come to the Fells Point Fun Festival! Admission is free and the trolleys, which run from the Inner Harbor, cost only a quarter. For more information phone the Presbyterian Society at (301) 675-6756.

This Week

The Washington Area Music Association (WAMA), will hold its Third Annual Wammies Awards Show on Monday, Oct. 5 at 7:00 p.m. at the Lisner Auditorium on the George Washington University campus. Call (202) 432-0200 for more information.

Chuck Brown

Sarah Vaughn

Acclaimed saxophonist Eddie Harris and legendary jazz vocalist Sarah Vaughn will be featured in two separate concerts next week at Georgetown's Blues Alley.

Harris, who made his initial impact on the jazz scene with his 1961 rendition of "Exodus," will appear Monday, Oct. 5.

Vaughn, also known as the "Divine One," has graced world-wide stages with her wide octave range vocals. She will be featured Tuesday through Sunday, oct. 6-11.

For more information call 337-4141.

Eddie Harris

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"Bustin' Loose:" New dimension to Vonetta McGee

Goddess of "black exploitation" moves beyond negative stereotype

By Karen Renee Taylor

It's been more than ten years since Vonetta McGee disappeared from the American movie screen, depriving the viewer of an unquestionable pleasure.

Her departure in many ways signaled the end of the era known as "black exploitation" — a term widely used to define the onslaught of black films in the 1970s; Vonetta McGee was one of the period's reigning goddesses.

She appeared in such movies as "Malinda," "Blackula," "Shaft in Africa," and "Thomasine and Bushrod." And McGee, in a recent interview, said, "Absolutely," if given the chance, she would portray these roles again.

"I think some of the finest films were made then. I think it was unfortunate that someone twined the term "black exploitation" which put a negative connotation on it and it created an atmosphere that made it easy to ignore them and allow them to disappear."

"I think very good films were done then, "she continued, "I think very good talent was nurtured during that time and unfortunately it was an arena that once it was killed, a lot of folks didn't have a place to go. When you do a white film . . . that's white exploitation . . . but I don't hear anyone hollering that," said McGee.

"Another thing you have to realize, is that a lot of those film were done by white people, so it was their consciousness too. But there were some great films that came out of that time though and they made a lot of money," she said.

However, according to McGee, "those films filled a need" and "money" was the force that ended that period of black films.

"I think there still is a need for it, but it was treated like a fad and like fads they go in and out. I think it was the beginning of an art form that was never really allowed fruition. It's unfortunate. I think our turn is coming around again and what's happening is we're simulating more. We're not trying to be so separate and apart."

Vonetta McGee as the caring social worker Mimi Shaw and Jimmie Walker, the quick-witted live-in helper Sonny Barnes, who team up to make a home for four foster children in the new syndicated comedy series "Bustin' Loose."

The cast of Bustin' Loose — (Clockwise L to R): Sue Anne Tyler (Marie Lynn Wise), Mimi Shaw (Vonetta McGee), Tricia Reagan (Tyren Perry), Rudey Butler (Larry Williams), Sonny Barnes (Jimmie Walker) and Nicky Robeson (Aaron Lohr).

"Things have changed in that we are getting some black writers who understand our experience and they are writing about it. If we get folks that understand the experience writing about it, then the roles will change. I can only interpret that what someone writes for me."

Despite the portrayal of black women in largely one-dimensional roles as either sinners or saints, McGee's intellect and fresh-faced perspectives always shined through. Her acting seemed different. She brought some unique qualities to her characters.

"I think what I've always tried to do is be as honest as possible to make sure I didn't do anything that was degrading the black folks and try to illuminate for the audience, whatever was going on in the deepest heart of that person. I've always tried to be honest and true and if I have to say anything about my work, it's what I really try to project," she asserted.

Born in San Francisco, the Vonetta McGee of today is vastly different. She is a community activist, a former artist-in-residence at the University of the District of Columbia, and wife. Her husband is actor Carl Lumbly of the hit CBS series "Cagney and Lacey" where she plays a recurring role as his wife.

Juggling an acting career and a marriage to another actor "works out very well," said McGee. "We have the same problems and we're talking the same language. I can tell him something that's happening and I don't need to explain a lot of things. He knows the feeling. He knows exactly what I am talking about. He understands the business," she said.

McGee has appeared in several films including "Repo Man," and "Eiger Sanction." She was a series regular on "Helltown" and has guest starred on "Magnum P.I.," "Different Strokes," "The Righteous Apples," "Amen," and "Benson."

This fall, McGee has again expanded her agenda as the star of the new series "Bustin' Loose," a Golden Groove production—a co-venture with MCA Television and Tribune Broadcasting Company. She portrays the sharp, well-educated and caring professional Mimi Shaw in the syndicated situation comedy.

"The role I'm playing on 'Bustin' Loose' is one of the career woman. I am a Vassar graduate. I'm very much apart of today's world and operating very well without a man and feeling whole about myself," said McGee, of her character Mimi Shaw, a role which parallels her life.