ALL THAT JAZZ

By Bob Matthews

This is rather a bleak week for jazz lovers in the Baltimore-Washington area, since there seems to be a dearth of big name artists from out of town appearing locally.

Which makes this a perfect time to look ahead to some of the events upcoming on the jazz scene.

Looking ahead to June, this will be a month wherein jazz is in the forefront. In fact, you'd better reserve all of the weekends in June for jazz happenings.

Tentatively scheduled for the weekend June 9-11 is an outdoor festival to be put on by Elzie Street at Oregon Ridge, the site of the BSO summer concert series.

So far, we have been informed, Elzie has lined up the Basie Band, led by Frank Foster, and Sarah Vaughan. According to our sources, these are firm commitments, and as you know, the pros never disappoint.

Also in the planning stages are negotiations with Maynard Ferguson, but we weren't sure whether the plans are to bring him in as a single, and supply the rhythm section, or for the Ferguson big band en toto.

Either way, it will be a part of a spectacular evening, so we look forward to this mini-festival.

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The weekend of June 23-25, The Eubie Blake Jazz Festival will be taking place at the Pier 6 concert hall in Baltimore's Inner Harbor area. The dates are important, for usually, this festival is held just prior to the end of the summer festival season.

By now, you probably have heard that construction will be starting soon on the renovations to Pier 5 where a huge development is scheduled to be erected.

Because of the expected disarray in the area, the Pier 6 concert season will go on as usual, but will be confined for the most part to the weekends.

This means, of course, that the Jazz Quest, which is a part of the Eubie Blake fest, will be moved up. You can expect the announcements to go out soon soliciting tapes of participants.

We'll be one of the judges again this year, and to pass on a little tip, contestants should use the best possible tape. Last year, for example, one of the groups seemed to be very good, but the quality of the tape was so poor, it was impossible to get a true assessment.

Was talking to Harold Adams last week—he was the guest artist at the Monday session at the Sportsmen's Lounge—and just happened to ask him how they made out, since he is a member of Moon August, the group which won the first Jazz Quest.

Seems they never got to Europe. They were expected to get a recording date set up for the London trip, but what they were offered, was simply a tourist type trip.

Of course, the Pier 6 hierarchy has changed considerably since that time, but perhaps we should do a follow up on what has happened to the former winners—and we will—look for it.

Continuing with the June lineup, the weekend of June 16-18 (O.K. so we should have listed this week first) the Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz will be holding its annual jazz festival.

The society already has commitments from the J. Johnson Quintet, Houston Person/Etta Jones, Flip Phillips, Scott Hamilton, Ira Sullivan, John

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New World Percussion Ensemble is on the move

By Misty Brown
AFRO Staff Writer

If you love rhythm and blues, jazz, new age, reggae, calypso and juju music combined into one beat, New World Percussion Ensemble is your groove.

This local African American band evolved during the late 1970s from Andrew Cacho's African drummers and dancers. "We were doing a lot of playing without a name. I decided to call the group the New World Percussion Ensemble because a "new world" is needed to create a positive change," said co-founder and spokesman, Mamadi Nyasuma.

The way they facilitate their message to people of all races is through the philosophy of the four E's "Education, Enlightenment, Entertainment and Enjoyment."

"It is very important to have a foundation with a message. We function with a family concept, such as planning trips to the beach or having picnics. In addition, our message is enhanced through the original African-designed clothes we wear on stage and health-conscious diets," said Nyasuma.

When they first started out, two people were playing the drums, now its a full scale band. There are eight members in the band; William Dixon, trap drums and percussion; Robert Williams, saxophone, flute, keyboards and percussion, Ayam Kuumba, bass and vocals, George R. Lee, guitar; Donnell Pearson, drums, percussion, harmonica and vocals; Johari Abdul Malik, trumpet, flugle horn and vocals, Nyasuma, percussion, drums, melodica and vocals; and Lloyd Wright, percussion.

"We use common objects from other cultures as musical instruments such as the conch shell for a horn, the bamboo stalk for a flute and an assortment of sticks and whatever we find that generates a melodic sound," said Nyasuma.

They have been compared to Earth, Wind and Fire or War. The only difference is a major record label is behind these acts and the community is sponsoring New World Percussion Ensemble.

This versatile band can please all tastes as you can see from their opening performances for internationally known musicians, Pharoah Saunders, Oscar Brown, Jr., Olantunji, Airto, Floria Purim, Leon Thomas, Sun Ra, Herbie Mann, Burning Spear and even the poet Haki Mahubuti.

New World Percussion Ensembles' eclectic soul-rendering, pulsating sound has been heard nationwide at numerous and diverse community cultural events: Malcolm X Day, St. Paul AME Zion Church Festival, Nation of Islam reception, Rap Inc. Reu-

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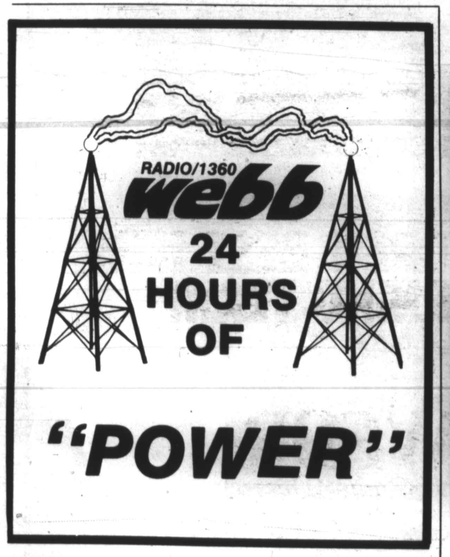

The New World Percussion Ensemble wearing Januwa Moja designs.

First black aerial act shines with the circus

SATIN, the electrifying aerial duet of unparalleled grace and beauty featuring cousins Denise Aubrey and Pa-mela Hernandez, has been a favorite of Circus fans all across the United States for the past two years.

This highly successful partnership, the first black aerial act with The Greatest Show On Earth, is featured in the 117th Edition of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at the Baltimore Arena on Tuesday, March 15th for 25 thrilling performances through Sunday, March 27th.

Commenting on their rise to fame, Pa-mela said, "At first we were unaccustomed to the sudden change in status, from showgirls to featured performers. The pace quickened as new demands were being made on our time for media interviews and such.

But, we have adjusted and everything is working out for the better."

"We are always working on our act, adding new moves, perfecting old ones, and designing even more beautiful costumes," added Denise. "We want our performances to be the very best."

Denise and Pa-mela are first cousins whose mothers were born and reared in Jamaica. Close friends since childhood, the two have had nearly identical careers.

Denise danced professionally in many West Coast productions before joining Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus as a dancer in 1979. She has danced with the Bob Hope USO tour and was a finalist in the Miss Black America competition in 1979.

Pa-mela was a serious dancer at age 16, studied drama in Hollywood for four years and also toured with the Bob Hope USO show for three years. She was third alternate in the Miss Black America competition and joined the Circus as a dancing showgirl in 1980.

Being earthbound held little fascination for this dynamic duo, so when coming up with an act they set their sights far above the arena floor. But creating an aerial act would require countless hours of practice.

"Before we could even start rehearsing, Denise and I had to work out with weights for several months to build our strength," Pa-mela recalls. "It was difficult, and the weightlifting was unbelievably exhausting. But, it was worth it, and we continue the training program to this day."

The pair received tremendous support from their Circus family, especially from band members Dave King and Bob Martin who helped arrange music for their audition. They were also assisted by Circus Producer Kenneth Feld who gave his encouragement as they perfected their act through long hours of practice. When they completed their audition for the entertainment impresario, he offered them a contract with The Greatest Show On Earth.

'Don't God Started' ends this Weekend at Lyric

WJZ-TV will co-sponsor the national tour debut of the gospel musical, "Don't Get God Started," at Baltimore's Lyric Opera House, now through Sunday, March 10. **A portion of the proceeds will benefit the local Associated Black Charities to expand its funding of health and human services programs.**

Direct from Broadway, this revivalist event with an old-time religious fervor centers on three couples who are confronted with problems involving drugs, sex, and marriage. Through these conflicts, the main characters come to an understanding of their need for spiritual values.

The entire Broadway cast, including Vanessa Bell Armstrong, Chip Fields, Giancarlo Esposito, and gospel Grammy winner, Marvin Winans, recreate their roles on the national tour. Ron Milner, the 1976 recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Playwright's Award for his play, WINE SELLERS, wrote the vignettes and directs the musical. The music and lyrics are by Winans.

Performances are scheduled Tuesday through Saturday evenings at 8:00 p.m., Sunday at 7:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3:00 p.m. For ticket and performance information, call 481-6000 or 625-4230 (group rates).

—New World Percussion Ensemble

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nion, Riverfest, AM Cancer Society Jazz Fest, Januwa Moja's Infinity fashion show, wedding receptions and much, much more.

"I have always enjoyed listening to New World Percussion Ensemble. They are excellent. When I heard them with Burning Spear the audience was jumping to the point the ceiling was rocking," said fan, Aisha Wahid.

"Sometimes we receive a request whereas we must breakdown from an eight-piece band to a jazz quintet. It is very interesting to provide the same energy with a smaller band to accomodate the patron budget," said Nyasuma.

They have performed on "Saturday Magazine," WKYS-FM and "Morning Break," WUSA Channel 9.

Presently, they have an opening song called the "Land Of The Drum," on the album "Frontliners," featuring artists from around the country. The album is produced by the National Black United Front.

The "Land of the Drum" stirs up ancient ancestral waves, conjures up images of foreign lands and the almighty boogie-woogie dance fever. This song is a collector's item.

"We are in the process of recording a video and re-mixing the song. We are adding a contemporary rhythm and blues mood with the African roots. We want it to appeal to all black people, bringing in the younger generation," said Nyasuma.

The future is very promising for this dynamic group. Fundraisers galore were held to raise money

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