Playwright Matura strives to present a positive image

By Olive Vassell

playwright Mustapha Matura is ed houses at Washington's Arena "Crossroads" theatre group Stage Theatre.

Trinidad, his birthplace, to seek pany, and the National Theatre And both those he has to some degree achieved.

For in addition, to a successful brings all of these attributes to tour of the US — the play receivhis rum-soaked, quick-firing ed rave reviews in its recent nel four; the BBC's "Black Silk," comedy, "Playboy of the West In- Chicago run, and will be perform- a legal drama; and scripted dies," currently playing to pack- ed at Yale and by the innovative Matura is also writing plays for Something Wrong in Paradise." It has been over 25 years since the two bastions of British Matura left the sun-filled isles of theater, Royal Shakespeare Com-

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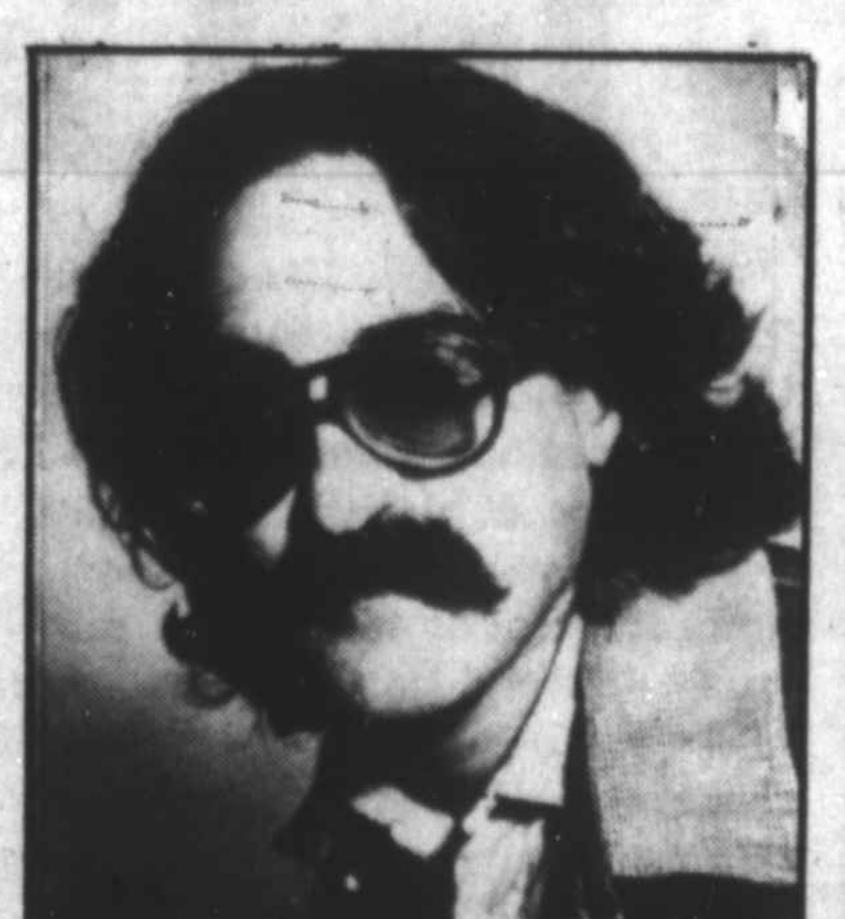
fame and fortune in England. and working on a television

A prolific artist, he wrote "No Problems" a successful black comedy series for Britain's Chansinger Kid Creole's 1985 Christmas spectacular "There's

But with all this increased recognition has come a responsibility to young black people in Britain, according Matura.

"The older I get the more I'm aware of my responsibility as a role model. There are so few role models around. I try to do things well, to set a good example in what I say and do. I try to point young black people in the right

As well as having few role models, Matura decries the lack of philanthropy for "furthering



MUSTAPHA MATURA

absence of a training ground for young blacks interested in the

"There is a real shortage o

ed about training them. Institutions are more interested in making money."

For his part, Matura — who rarely directs his plays. He is too busy he said writing and "staying - is using his increased clout to suggest that producers hire a couple of black assistant directors when they stage his plays.

And the popularity of his works sometimes surprises even Matura. He said of the US success of his play "The Playboy of the West Indies" — based on the Irish classic, "Playboy of the Western World," by J.M. Synge, "everybody here is aware of the Caribbean. It's part of America's

trating on staying fresh. "I always think of myself as a newcomer. An artist can't afford to think that

'Playboy' Tickles THE FUNNYBONE All THE WHILE WARMING YOUR HEART

By Olive Vassell

Its bright, bubbly, eyewateringly funny and its playing at Washington's Arena theatre. "Playboy of the West Indies," by Trinidian-born playwright, Mustapha Matura will keep you laughing long after the lights have been turned down.

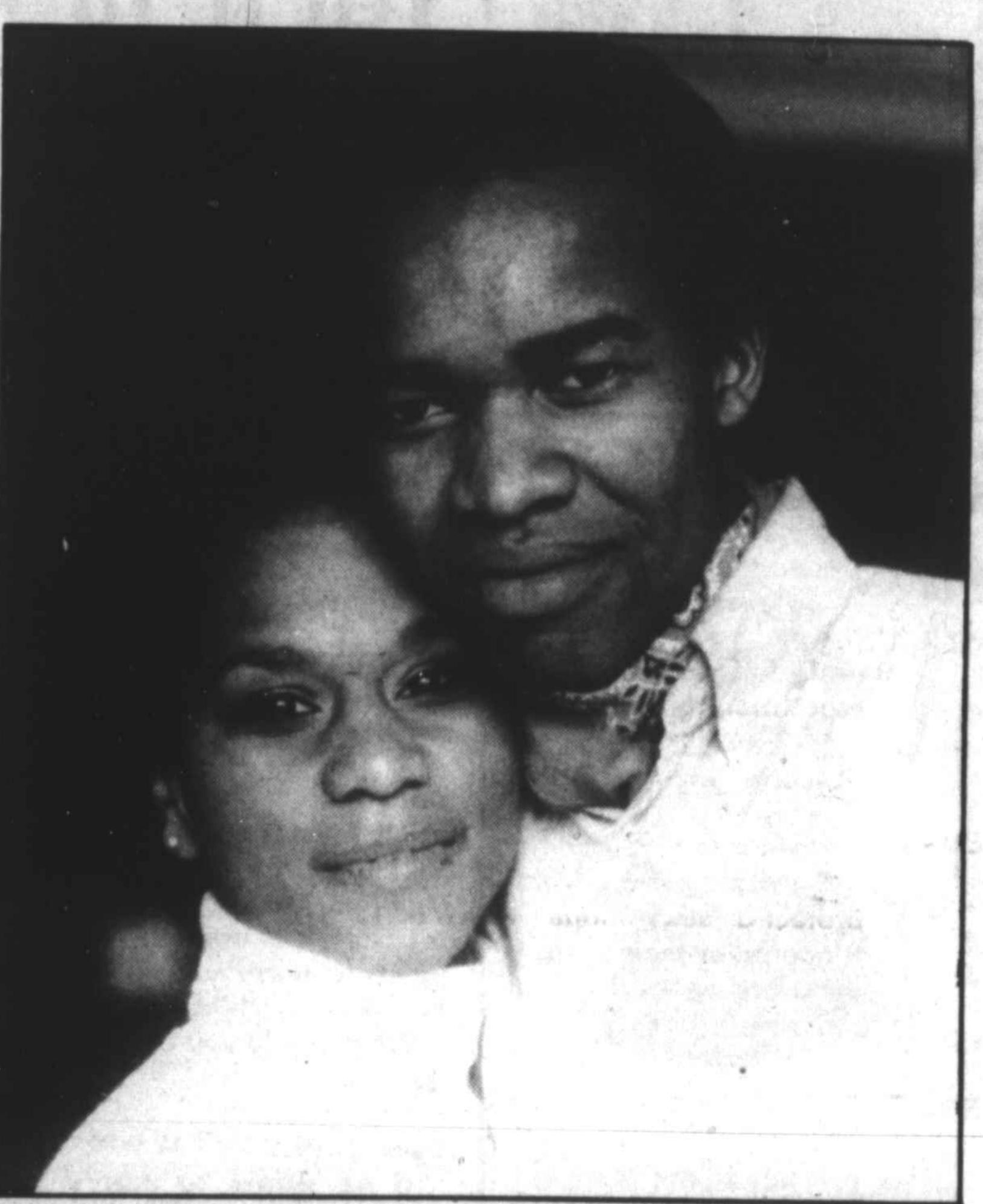
The piece is set in Trinidad circa 1950. The story centers around a young man called Ken, who one night stumbles into a rumshop in the island's hinterland.

The establishment is run by a sharp-tongued, strong-willed shrew called Peggy, who spends her time keeping her drunken father in line, while fending off the advances of a cowardly TAXING JAKI BROWN AND ROBI REED THE MICHAEL R. MILLER PROTECTION OF TOM RICHMOND PRODUCTS RAYMOND KATZ NO ERIC L. GOLD | businessman called Stanley.

CO PRODUCIOS ERIC BARRETT AND TAMARA RAWITT "TOUCH PETER MCCARTHY AND CARL CRAIG STRICTED BY KEENEN IVORY WAYANS LA Housed by the pair, Ken blurts out that he killed his father. What follows is a masterpiece in wit and farce. Ken is hailed as a hero' and fawned over by all -

especially the village women. Emboldened by his new found fame and a growing romantic interest with Peggy, Ken begins to boast of his exploits. But his dreams of domestic bliss and eternal respect are suddenly shattered with the arrival of a

The young man is forced t confront his father and eventual ly loses favor with Peggy and co, but is reunited with his parent. Matura's cast is at best outstanding and at worst, credible. Leon Addison Brown raises to the occasion as a first shy, but increasingly cocky Ken.



TONIA ROWE, who plays Peggy and Leon Addison Brown who play Ken (The Playboy!) are shown out-of-costume for the play "Playboy of The West Indies" now playing at The Arena Stage.

Tonia Rowe plays sharp tongued Peggy with spunk and charm. While, Faye Richie is a delightfully sassy Mama Benin.

watch, but Sullivan Walker, Mikey, captured the hearts of the audience with his drunken forays 484-0247.

on stage and L.Peter Callender, Stanley excelled as the cowering

see." Catch it from now through Jan. 22, 1989 at the Arena Stage.

(Continued from Page 4 chose," said Gerald, "but my father didn't want me to be a performer because of all the ups and downs, all the trying times and all the time spent to get into the

-LEVERT

"He tried to make us aware by saying the business was more serious than it looked. It's not just singing and performing. An entertainer should be versatile and be able to write and produce

But ironically, their bloodline hampered Levert's chances at a recording contract.

"A lot of people said we sounded too much like the O'Jays Gerald said. "We couldn't get o

Yet the trio persevered and broke through the music barrier with "Bloodline" which spawned two top ten singles and "(Pop, Pop, Pop, Pop) Goes My Mind," which shot to No. 1.

"With our first album, a lot of people bought it out of curiosity. But now, they're buying it because they know it's us. They like our music and what we're trying to do. We had to establish something for ourselves."

In 1987, Levert assaulted the charts again with the release of the "Big Throwdown," which Baltimore Office of Promotion 301-837-INFO (4636). achieved gold status with three top ten singles, including the certified No. 1 r&b and top five pop smash "Casanova," which aptly describes Levert's antics on

While Gerald sings "I ain't no Casanova," onstage Levert drives the audience into passionate frenzies with their soulful pleading, urging grunting and "Elvisonian" pelvic gyrations reminiscent of patriarch Eddie Sr.

Levert, as a result, has become a top attraction on the concert circuit. Their performances have netted Levert an admirable reputation for performing some of the most soulful and stirring concerts in recent years throwbacks to the soul concerts of yore a la Otis Redding.

Gerald agreed Levert tries to project a "sexy image" which is triggered by their songs which he describes as "very melodic, very romantic and very truthful."

"Everyday things in life are what we sing about...things that everybody can relate to."

While the group acknowledges being influenced by such r&b artists such as Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson and of May the peace of God be with you and your family during this holiday season. course the O'Jays; they stressed they maintain their success by keeping current.

"We stay with what's happening today and add our touch to "Gerald said. "You have to they're requesting all the time. If we do that we don't think we can

spoken as 1988 has been a productive year for Levert with their third No. 1 hit, "Addicted to You," from the soundtrack "Coming to

Levert was also involved in writing and producing for Miki sions", including singles "That's our music, fine. If not, that's fine What Love Is" and "Crazy" and too. Troop's self-titled debut album, with the single "Mamacita".

But for the last six months group has been "just cooling" which, by the way, is the name of their third album.

"Just Cooling", which features but not so for Levert. some of the most "jam-the-box" funk Levert has ever done, was - for the first time - produced solely by the group.

"This is our first attempt at doing some of the harder-edged, funk stuff that the young people listen to," said Gerald. "We real- forever. We've been able to be ly were interested in diversifying our music and to see if we could there."

next time you want them." Lou Rawls Parade of Stars telethon. For some groups, success THE STARS SHINE BRIGHT

While Levert is concerned with

expanding their audience, the

group says they are not overly

concerned with crossing over to

"That's not our basic concern,"

Gerald said. "If they can get with

the pop charts.

Gerald said, "but there are a lot our favorite actors, singers and of people out here who have C comedians will be there, to give what it takes but don't get the higher education a big boost. Lou

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