Ernie Hodge: car dealer with a difference

By Joy M. Tyler
AFRO Staff Reporter

The world of car sales has a unique air all its own.

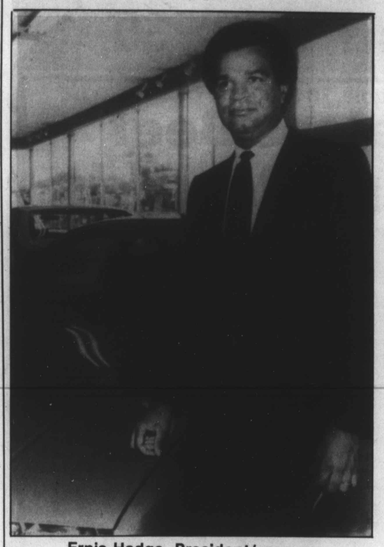
The reputation of high pressured sale tactics, and dishonest salesmen who want to make a sale at any cost are stigmas that are industry wide.

You say that all car dealerships are alike, and you can't believe a word that comes from their lips?

Well, a new dealer is town, Ernie Hodge Chevrolet is not only out to sell an automobile, but to get its customers to "experience the difference."

Sitting behind the desk of a modest, but tasteful office just off the showroom floor is the president of Hodge Chevrolet, owner Ernie Hodge.

A new arrival to Maryland, this Virginian has pulled up his stakes from the south to begin a life's goal of starting his own car sales company.



Ernie Hodge, President/ owner

Hodge himself defies the typical stereotype of a dictator only concerned with sales numbers. Laid back, confident, and knowing what he wants for himself and his customers is what radiates from this entrepreneur.

Hodge is no newcomer to the world of car sales and management. Since 1977, after much prodding and foresight of a friend, he discovered that car sales was his forte.

"My lifetime goal to fulfill my dream of being a dealership owner came by accident," said Hodge.

"I had no intention of going into this business. I have a business degree from Norfolk State and a friend suggested that I give it a try.

"I made good money, selling 26 cars my first month and have been selling and managing ever since," Hodge said.

Recently opening his doors in March of this year, Hodge has taken the bull by the horns, with the voice of experience and the confidence of his financial backer, General Motors, to take on his biggest challenge, himself.

This Black businessman found GM's program for minorities and initiated his dream into reality.

As with any new business, his goal is to stabilize business within the community of Elkridge which he says welcomed him sincerely, and provides him with unlimited growth potential.

Moving across state lines to start a new business is not the only obstacle that Hodge has faced during the past three months.

His wife of 16 years, Modesteen and two sons ages 13, Markis and 10 year-old Dario are still back home in Virginia Beach, Virginia awaiting his call to relocate.

But for this young 40-year-old family man, his immediate relatives are his family of 32 employees of Hodge Chevrolet.

Putting in long days at the office is no picnic. Working hours from 7 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. are not unusual for someone just starting his own business, and Hodge sees it as a labor of love.

"I don't have a lot of time to do much of anything besides the running of my business, but I don't mind," said Hodge.

One a rare occasion when there is time for play, Hodge like to spend time with the family, because it is so rare, and teeing off at a golf course.

The owner/president's favorite car ? The newest and hottest car selling, the GEO Storm, Hodges proclaimed.

Don't look for Hodge sitting around twiddling his thumbs, because a wise business man knows what it takes to be a success in a market where few Blacks get the opportunity to be self employed.

As the motto says as customers pull up for a great deal on an offer they can't refuse, Ernie Hodge wants his customers to "Experience the difference."

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Join us in celebrating 10 great years in Baltimore and share in the life of a great city.

A GREAT BEGINNING DAY — FRIDAY, JUNE 29
8 pm The excitement begins with a 90-minute Baltimore Symphony Orchestra pops concert conducted by William McGlaughlin and featuring soloist Jubilant Sykes, The Morgan State Choir and the Children's Chorus of Maryland — with a thrilling fireworks finale. (Raindate: June 30, 8pm) ★
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T.RowePrice Invest With Confidence

KID'S DAY — SATURDAY, JUNE 30
Celebrate the city's future — our children... breakfast with Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse and Roger Rabbit, Children's theatre and 200 tap dancing youngsters.
8 pm Greater Baltimore Youth Orchestra (Raindate for Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and fireworks) ★
Brought to you through the generosity of:
1st First National Bank of Maryland

DEPENDABLY ARTS DAY — SUNDAY, JULY 1
Baltimore's performing artists take the stage to present modern dance, jazz and theatre.
8 pm The Young Victorian Theatre performs "Pirates of Penzance" in a theatre under the stars ★
Brought to you through the generosity of:
ROUSE-TEACHERS PROPERTIES, INC.

BIRTHDAY DAY — MONDAY, JULY 2
Harborplace's actual birthdate focuses on Baltimore's famous food traditions from crabcakes to birthday cakes plus lots of delicious fun.
4 pm Phillips Restaurant's crab feast to benefit literacy. Call 576-READ for tickets. Adults $25, Children $12.50
8 pm Sweet Adelines, Heart of Maryland Chorus and a cappella group, Regency ★
Brought to you through the generosity of:
STOUFFER HARBORPLACE HOTEL BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

INTERNATIONAL DAY — TUESDAY, JULY 3
A showcase of Baltimore's neighborhoods with Chinese Dragon dancers, Polish polka music, Irish pipe band, Italian folk dance, African drummers and more.
8 pm Parade of Nations and "Up With People" concert ★
Brought to you through the generosity of:
KPMG Peat Marwick

INDEPENDENCE DAY — WEDNESDAY, JULY 4
Patriotic nostalgia...vintage vehicles, Big Nazo puppets, square dancers and bluegrass music.
8 pm Glenn Miller Orchestra and fireworks finale ★
Brought to you through the generosity of:
Baltimore Bar and Bistro; WJZ TV 13; Baltimore Area Toyota Dealers

STREET PERFORMERS DAY — THURSDAY, JULY 5
Celebrating the art of street theatre with jugglers, fire eaters, Big Nazo puppets, musicians and more.
8 pm Juggling, fireshow finale (Raindate for 4th of July fireworks) ★
Brought to you through the generosity of:
Coca-Cola

CITY VISIONS DAY — FRIDAY, JULY 6
This day celebrates Maryland artists with artists-in-action, a huge mural-in-progress and sand sculptures by architects.
8 pm Jeff Order and Company presents, "City Visions" — a multi-media New Age concert ★
Brought to you through the generosity of:
Attivô CIGNAL
Divisions of Merry-Go-Round Enterprises, Inc.

HARBOR DAY — SATURDAY, JULY 7
A celebration of the harbor...with sailboats, pleasure boats, Chesapeake Bay crafts, live music and the mid-day arrival of *The Libertad* from Argentina — the longest tall ship in the world.
8 pm The U.S. Navy Concert Band ★
Brought to you through the generosity of:
USF&G CORPORATION

SALUTE TO MARYLAND DAY — SUNDAY, JULY 8
The celebration's finale...jousting, lacrosse, renaissance performers and 8 community bands from around the state.
8 pm 7 community bands, 250 strong, unite in a celebratory musical finale with fireworks ★
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Open Monday-Saturday: 10am-10pm; Sunday: noon-8pm. Some restaurants open early for breakfast and most close very late. On-site parking for 1,150 cars in The Gallery Garage and for 850 in the lot adjacent to the Light Street pavilion. Or, catch the Metro to Charles Center until midnight Monday-Saturday. **Special evening parking rate: Just $3 after 5pm.** Events may be subject to change. For information, call 301/234-1032.
Proceeds from all celebration logo merchandise benefit "Baltimore Reads, Inc.," the literacy initiative of Baltimore City's Mayor, Kurt L. Schmoke.

Jehovah's Witnesses convene

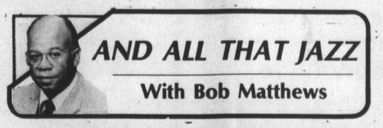
The first of three weekend District Conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses ended Sunday, June 24 in thunderous applause as a speaker reiterated the thematic message of the four - day teaching and preaching session.

There were repeated outbursts of applause as the speaker announced new countries in which the Jehovah's Witnesses can now legally take their evangelical message: the West African country of Benin, East Germany and Rumania.

The Capital Centre crowd of more than 14,800 included Jehovah's Witnesses and persons of interest from Baltimore, suburban Maryland, Washington, Virginia and parts of Pennsylvania and Delaware.

AREA ENTERTAINMENT

The Jazz Festival season is underway



AND ALL THAT JAZZ
With Bob Matthews

We're back from a fantastic, music - filled vacation, and once again can attest that the Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz Festival is one of the best in the world.

This year's fest, held in Harrisburg, PA, June 15-17, was brimming over with magical moments of jazz, and over 50 Baltimoreans and several Washingtonians were on hand.

Highlights of the opening night included a glorious excursion into straight ahead jazz by **Kenny Barron**, along with **Ray Drummond**, bass, and **Ben Riley**, drums.

This actually was the pseudo house band, which provided the rhythm section for several artists throughout the fest. In fact, they backed up **Stanley Turrentine** that same evening.

And Stanley was in rare form. He seemed a bit surprised by the enthusiastic reception he received at the session, and responded in a crowd - pleasing manner which brought a standing ovation.

Festival perennial **Ira Sullivan** was up next with his quartet consisting of **Steve Bagby**, drums; **Reuben Brown**, piano, and **Cecil McBee**, bass, with predicted results — fantastic — and it was.

* * *

Saturday events kicked off at 2:00 p.m. with Chertok's vintage jazz films, followed by some of the local musicians who surprisingly were better than average.

Evening sessions began with the Festival Reunion Band, composed of artists who have appeared at festivals through its 10 years of existence.

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Band included **Cal Collins**, guitar; **Al Grey**, trombone; **Buck Hill**, tenor sax; **Valery Ponomarev**, trumpet, **Frank Smith**, bass, **Steve Rudolph**, piano, and **Steve Bagby**, drums.

Must say that Buck and Valery played truly inspired solos, but Al Grey kinda put a damper on things with his "takeover" demeanor, completely deflating the high - energy performance that was going on prior to his late arrival on stage.

This was all quickly forgotten when the Tommy Flanagan Trio took the stand, with George Mraz on bass, and Denard Harper, drums. The "professor" besides playing brilliantly, really cracked the audience up with his dry wit.

Surprise of the group was the appearance of Baltimorean Denard Harper (of the Harper brothers) on drums. He proceeded to show the knowledgeable jazz audience that he was destined for true greatness.

Next up was the **Mongo Santamaria** Afro - Cuban Octet, whose highly charged infectious music brought the audience to its feet, and bodies to swaying.

It was now about 11 p.m., and things weren't over yet. The next group was billed as the Alto Summit, which brought together newcomers to the jazz world **Vincent Herring** and **Christopher Hollyday**, along with veteran **Ira Sullivan**.

Backed by the **Kenny Barron Trio**, they really soared on their horns. Herring, who records for Blue Note, confessed on stage that he had been a student of **Gary Bartz**, and copied a lot of his style from Gary.

With that, he introduced Gary to sit in — he had even brought along an alto for him to play — and Gary proceeded to show the youngsters what playing an alto sax was all about — a truly brilliant performance.

* * *

Sunday brought the Mingus Dynasty up with **George Adams**, tenor sax; **Craig Handy**, tenor; **Jack Walrath**, trumpet, **Ray Drummond**, bass, **John Hicks** piano, and **Billy Hart**, drums.

This was a truly spectacular outing with the music of **Charlie Mingus** played as the master might have wished. Next group featured vocalist **Anita Moore**, and the less said about her performance, the better.

Freddy Hubbard came next with the Barron trio, augumented by **Vincent Herring** on alto. And — Freddie was Freddie — which means he was musically excellent albeit his onstage presence is still bordering on the irreverent.

Jam session closing out the feat included **Ira Sullivan, Joe Diorio, Red Mitchell, Reuben Brown, Steve Bagby** and **Johnny Coles**. A fitting climax for the 10th annual festival — which keeps getting better each year.

Went to New York to check out the JVC festival which was going on last week, and especially wanted to catch the **Dizzy Gillespie United Nations Band** at Carnegie Hall.

Opening the set that night was the **Marcus Roberts Sextet**, whose presentation was so stylized that it seemed they were overawed to be playing in Carnegie Hall.

Dizzy's band for this occasion was loaded with stars, including **Paquito D'Rivera, Slide Hampton, James Moody, Airto Moreira, Flora Purim, Claudio Roditi, Steve Turre,** and **Jon Faddis.**

Should have been a musical event to remember, but with a sound system that never quite made it — the band just didn't quite get it together.

Individually, the soloists were star quality, but overall, the performance was flat.

Freddie Hubbard

Stanley Turrentine

Mongo Santamaria

Tommy Flanagan

Jack Walrath, Craig Handy, George Adams

PHOTOS BY FLOYD WILLIAMS

Kenny Barron

Ben Riley

Johnny Colés and Red Mitchell

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