By Carl Matthews

DIANA ROSS "Workin' Overtime" (Motown)

"I wanted to do an album that would reflect the reality of kids today ..." says Diana Ross, who, after 55 albums and more than 15 years in the music business, is showing no signs of slowing down. Diana returns to the Motown label with her latest

On her latest album, Diana is once again working with Nile Rodgers, who had produced her hits "Upside Down" and "I'm Coming Out."

You'll immediately notice the hip hop and "house" music influence on the new Rodgersproduced tracks. On such tracks as "Workin' Overtime" and "Say We Can," the synths and drum machines provide a steady, percolating background that is extremely busy — so busy, in fact, that Diana's voice seems lost in the musical soup.

I think a lot of listeners will

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feel that Diana's voice simply doesn't fit this "house". influenced style of street funk. Diana is no Alyson Williams or tions on receiving our Nightlife Lisa Lisa. The mellower tracks, such as "This House," (a this week and keep on being the other things) are okay, but they lack that special sparkle that we "pro " Ask the sustaments." know Diana is capable of

KOOL AND THE GANG "Sweat" (Mercury)

They've got 25 R&B top ten hits

"Kool And The Gang," made the pop and R&B charts.

Their early albums such as recent recorded efforts.

And then came the mid-70's. and their first big pop hits, singer who recently suffered they were making them.

Their 1974 LP "Light Of Worlds" was a critically-acclaimed album which featured such memorable tracks as "Higher Plane" and "Rhyme Time People."

However, not everything they released in the late 70's was a hit. There were no big hit singles from their "The Force" and "Everybody's Dancing" albums. In 1979, James "J.T." Taylor

joined the group, and Kool And The Gang was back on the charts with their "Ladies Night" single. Last year "J.T." left the group, and new lead vocalists Skip Martin and Odeen Mays joined.

Kool And The Gang's latest album features Mays and Martin, along with Kool And The Gang veterans Charles Smith (guitar), Dennis "Dee Tee" Thomas (alto sax), George Brown (drums), and of course, Robert "Kool" Bell was with their "Light Of Worlds"

leaned toward derivative for- "Emergency" had some fine, mula music, with lots of pleasant memorable moments. But I'm pop songs suitable for radio play. sorry, fellows, I just can't recom-To me, "Sweat" is just another uninteresting, run-of-the-mill Kool And The Gang album.

The album includes the current I Get Close To You," "You Are single, "Raindrops," written and The Meaning Of Friend."

produced by Chuckii Booker. It's a spirited mid-tempo tune that pretty much sticks to the contemporary R&B formula of such wellknown artists as Al B. Sure! and

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

It's catchy enough and could be their biggest hit since "Fresh," but the guys just don't sound like a band of accomplished musicians anymore; on this single they sound like little more than back-up musicians for Martin.

With bland material such as "Never Give Up" and "You Got My Heart On Fire," I predict weak sales for this LP.

I remember how impressed I and "Open Sesame" LPs of years The group's last few albums ago. Even the more recent

> Other cuts: "I Swet," "This Is What A Love Can Do," "How Can

dancing his life against the strong wishes of his lawyer black people that blacks themselves must put in perspective and deal with. The play has run successfully on

22, and 23, 1989. Major characters in the play are a black, middle-class family, including a mother, father, older sister, young son, and uncle. Actors must also b e able to sing. There are some dancing

Well now, about the moon and

It was brought to my attention

To set a time for an audition, call Artistic Director Sam the Arena Playhouse, (301) 728-65500. To audition, it is not mandatory that actors hold current membership to the Arena Players. However, prior to the opening of the production, all onstage actors must be

I picked up the audition script There's nothing wrong with the stars, I took a shot in space dress and wore my mirror out, their "youngun's" to go for it, tell- that one of the top Baltimore

> "Thank you. That's it," came the producer's voice and it was

a deep breath prior to opening "the big one."

Darn if it wasn't a form letter

But in all sincerity, it was an interesting experience and I still have the most wonderful au-AFRO readers.

Just be ready! Watch out Oprah. And should the folks

(Continued from Page 3)

Q. What about "Fast Peg?

A. I got it out of a few situa-

Jail's not as cool as i

-Tells All

sounds.

and began boning up for my rise to the top. Even bought a new testing facial expressions.

ing them that if they miss, they television stations had a new Finally, the moment of truth show on the drawing board and came and I was on camera.

Nothing wrong with stars would soon be holding auditions "Hello, I'm Bonnie Matthews Butler and welcome to my audipointed if you miss 'em both and To my surprise, a phone call tion . . ." Of course, the audition just remain a good ole' solid was all it took to get a date and taping was a mere eight minutes. citizen here on earth. And that's time for my chance at every girl's What the heck, I was lovin' the whole thing.

"How'd I do?" "You were just fine. You'll hear from us in a few days."

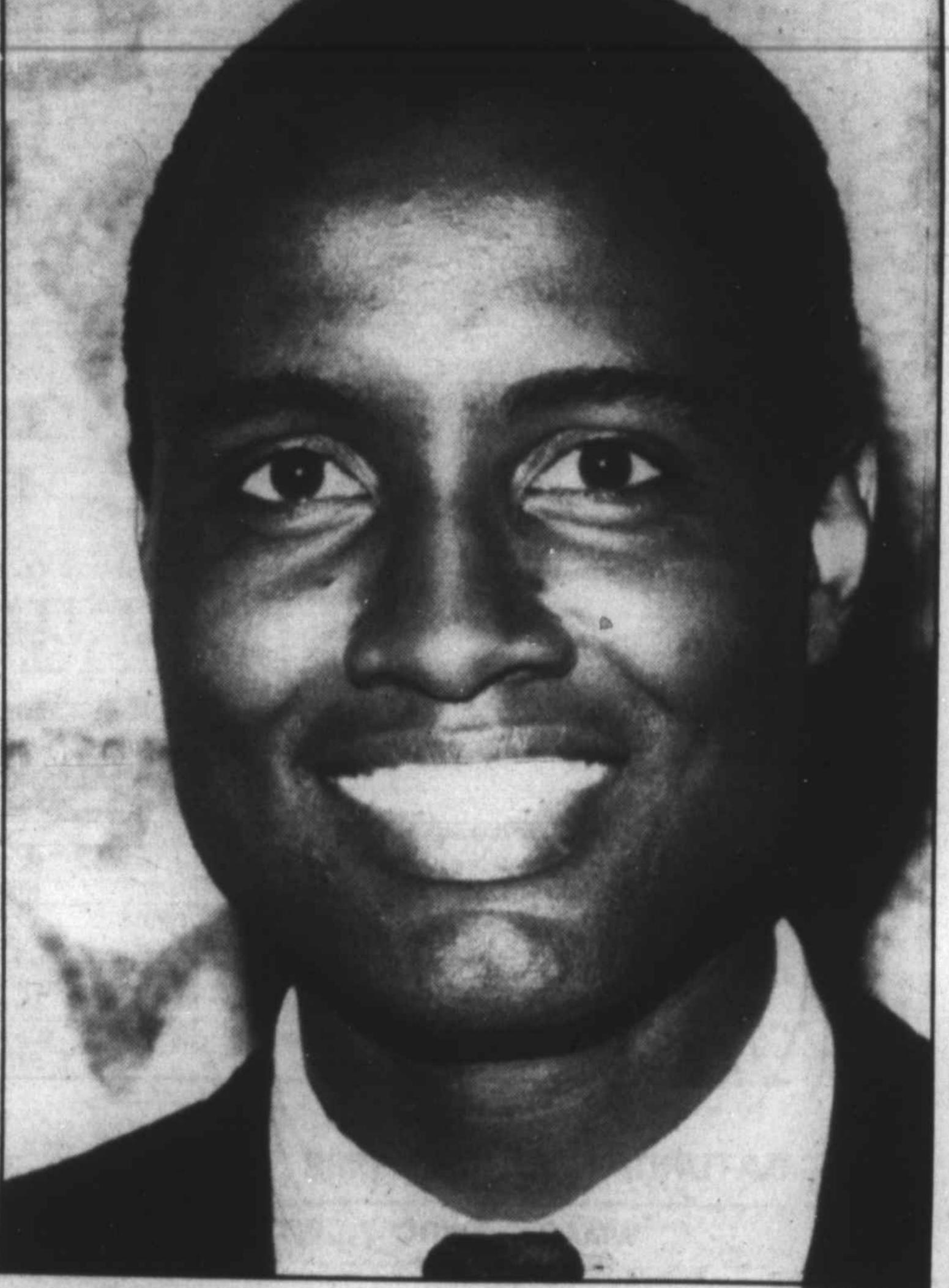
You'd have thought I was a "Thursday Moma," or a Social Security recipient, the way greeted the postman daily, waiting for my letter to climb the stairway to the stars.

It came a few days later. I took

that all, but one, of the aspirants received. Yep, it is a nicelyworded, "don't give up"—an encouraging "not you" response.

Next time I speak to my pal Oprah Winfrey, I'll have to ask her if she ever got one of those during her early days?

However, take it from me, opportunity often knocks more than "Jacob Lawrence: Portrait of an Artist" profiles the life and once.



Lowell Dec is the newest general assignment reporter at WJZ-TV in Baltimore. Originally from Lubbock, Texas, Dec brings his talents to Charm City from KATV in Little Rock, Arkansas.

_decide to add a roving reporter to the lineup, don't forget me. I'm ready

the Violence Movement

and recorded the song

"Self-Destruction." Did you

She was in distress and

have any part in that?

A. I wrote MC Lyte's rhyme.

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-Night Life

(Continued from Page 5) "PAT ON THE BACK" salute for "pro." Ask the customer(s).

Meanwhile, back at the other ranches: Vance James is back from his worldwide tour with the Hank Crawford and Jimmy to their credit and they're still McGriff Quartet. Not only was rollin'. Kool And The Gang's he featured at the Hampton Jazz "Sweat," is their Festival in the U.S., the tour took 23rd studio album in 20 years. him all over the United Kingdom Back in 1969, Kool And The and Canada. "One thing that Gang, a group of young New blew my mind was that the crowd Jersey-ites with jazz in their was happy to know me," said blood, recorded their first R&B Vance. "I play on the group's album for the De-Lite label titled album, 'The Soul Brothers' that "Kool And The Gang." The first | wasn't released here but is hot single, an instrumental also titled over there and some fans came to hear **me** play drums," said Vance modestly. We certainly understand why, for this is one "Music Is The Message" and talented brother. Vance will be "Good Times" displayed the home in Baltimore for about group's trademark horn sound, a three weeks and he heads off tight, perfectly-blended, profes- again . . . Over 200 people sional sound performed with the jammed the Sphinx Club and energy and verve that has been more than \$600 was raised at the lacking in Kool And The Gang's benefit for singer Nikki Cooper held recently. An outpouring of love was expressed for this tiny "Funky Stuff," "Jungle Boogie" heart problems and was and "Hollywood Swinging." The hospitalized. Nikki has bounced Gang's records sounded like they back and will strut her stuff were enjoying themselves while | beginning Wednesday (July 26) and every Wednesday at the Sphinx Club on Pennsylvanio Ave. She'll appear along with Sir

Thomas Hurley on keyboard

Bobby Ward on drums and



Nikki Cooper

Clayton McClendon on guitar . . . The Maryland State Summerfest on the Bay, scheduled for August 12 has snared a "biggie" for the festivities this year. Sexy singer Millie Jackson and singer Luther Ingram ("If Loving You Is Wrong, I Don't Want To Be Right) along with a host of popular Maryland-Washington, D.C. musicians are on the line-up this year. This all-day family affair will kick-off with two receptions announcing the event on Thursday, July 27 at Hunt Ridge Restaurant in the Yorkridge Shopping Center and on Tuesday, August 1 at the 20 Grand on Bowleys Lane in Baltimore. Both events begin at 5 p.m. For information on this afternoon o' merriment, call Dr. Louise Johnson or Sharon Randall

We want to send out a get well wish and hope for a speedy recovery to legendary saxophonist Mickey Fields. Our spies report that he hasn't been taking his medicine and had to cancel his appearance at the Lorman House last Tuesday. Popular sax man Andy Ennis sat in in his place. Get well Mickey, we miss

Auditions scheduled for 'TAP DANCE Kid'

career of a man whose works chronicle the black experience

on a one-hour special airing Wednesday, July 26 at 9 p.m. on

The Arena Players will celebrate the opening of its 37th year as the country's oldest black community theater with a production of the exciting musical comedy, "Top Dance Kid." The contemporary story of a

Channel 32.

By Bonnie Matthews Butler

ter of fact, some folks encourage

might fall among the stars.

reaching for the moon. As a mat- last week.

either, but don't be too disap- for a host or hostess.

not the easiest task in the world. dream—stardom!

young boy's dream to make father, the "Tap Dance Kid" explores the stereotypes Broadway in past years, and in September of 1989, will give Baltimore talent an opportuni-

ty at the Arena Playhouse Auditions for the production are scheduled for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, July 21,

For more information about Arena Players membership or current production schedule, please direct your call to Ben Prestbury at (301) 728-6500.

tions that happened in my needed the help, so I did neighborhood. I watched these young ladies thin Q. How does it feel to have ing it's cute to talk to recently turned 21? drug dealer and prand A. I don't believe in birthday

around in their diamona and fancy clothes and the cars. And I hear about young lady getting her head literally chopped off and left in the park 'cause she messed with money or her man messea up. That's a serious song

Not a happy ending. Q. A lot of rappers feel concerned enough about the question of black-on-black crime that they banded together to form the Stop

parties, s--- like that. It's a waste of time. Q. You do feel a little older than when you first started

making records five years

Q. Do you feel wiser? Yeah, I feel a lot wiser. My thoughts go deeper now. I'm not just a surface thinker anymore.

Q. How did you get deeper? 4. Just living, looking, watch-