—Baltimore becomes

(Continued from Page A1)

Social events weren't the only events that were noteworthy. The Elks who are involved in their respective communities all year long, held their annual education and civil liberties meetings to voice their concerns over problems of concern to the organization.

AWARDS BANQUET

The thirty-Seventh Annual Emma V. Kelly Achievement Awards Banquet- The prestigious Elks LoveJoy Award was bestowed upon NAACP Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Benjamin Hooks.

Hooks was honored for his outstanding contribution to the NAACP and the continuing struggle he continuously faces to fight for the rights of Black Americans, and his continued support to the Elks.

Baltimorean, Victorine Q. Adams received the Emma V. Kelly Achievement Award for her role in becoming the first black woman to be elected to the Baltimore City Council, and sponsoring many community based efforts to help those who need it most.

* * *

Other high profile events included the annual National Oratorical Contest, Beauty and Talent Contest- National Youth Talent Search- Antlered Guard Military Ball, Grand Temple Pageant, and the final hurrah, The Grand Temple Charity Ball.

* * *

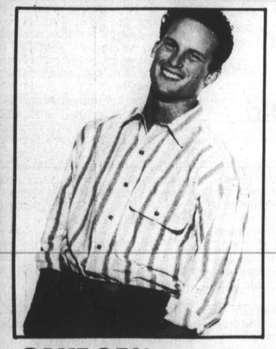
The International Elks Parade was by far one of the more popular activities in which the general public could attend.

Nearly 20,000 participants marched in bands, drill teams. Local chapters from member states, and official Elk hierarchy were all on hand to show Baltimore their finest.

Thousands of people stopped their daily activities to cheer on the variety of groups that performed during the parade as they made their way through downtown.

Black History Exhibit

From July 25 through September 30, the Howard County Center of African-American Culture will sponsor an exhibit of Black artifacts to commemorate the families of Howard County. This exhibit will be open to the public from 12 noon until 5 p.m. every Tuesday and Saturday at the Howard County Historical Society, 8328 Court Ave., Ellicott City. Call 596-5786 or 730-0230



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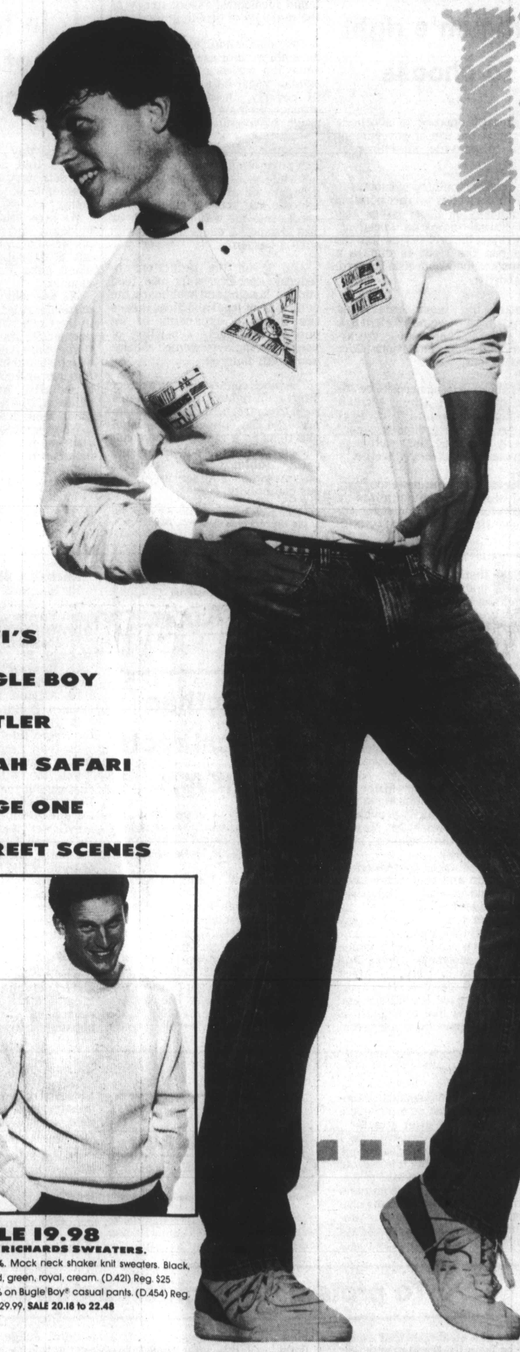

Back to SCHOOL

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The Afro-American Section B

METRO PROFILE

■ Entertainment/ Lifestyle B4
■ Clean Block B6

Saturday, August 12, 1989

FROM THE ASHES OF THE PHOENIX

Countdown For D.C.'s Lincoln Theatre Opening

By Robyn-Denise Yourse
AFRO City Editor

After more than a decade of darkness, the lights on U Street's Lincoln Theater shone once more at groundbreaking ceremonies last Monday night —a signal that the now tarnished performing arcade is about to return to its former glory.

The crowd of more than 1,000 who attended the gala were ecstatic and boasted of a new growth in an area where the smells of decaying buildings often mingle with the spicy aromas from Ben's Chili Bowl, the Lincoln's next door neighbor.

"What we are doing here is remarkable", one speaker told the group, "and you're going to see it happen. You're going to see things happen in just 18 months."

The heady build-up to the Lincoln's opening has been perfectly planned, some observers noted, to coincide with the completion of Metro's Green Line which will open in 1991. "That way many people will have access to get uptown to come to the theater", one official said.

Monday evening's gala even appears to have been well-orchestrated. Last weekend, the small group of Lincoln staffers poured over scores of scrapbooks chocked with theater memorabilia, and discussed the proper order of protocol for the ceremonies.

So important was the theater in the community that every single event — no matter how small — was recorded. There were the annual Cooking Schools, sponsored by the AFRO AMERICAN NEWSPAPER that attracted nearly 5,000 attendees, and a detailed account of why Louis Armstrong abruptly canceled a sold out engagement after learning the show's promoters had given him a bad check.

"the finest theatre of its kind for colored people anywhere"

"It's very important that everything be right , " said Fran Cohen, who is heading up the Lincoln's $4 million renovation effort , and views the theater as a multi-cultural/multi-ethnic performance arena. "This is history."

The renovations, when complete, will restore the Lincoln's interior to its former opulence, explains Jeff Koenrich, Mrs. Cohen's executive assistant. "When they built this theater, no expense was spared. Even the designs on the fabric wall panelings are one of a kind. Fortunately, these were not damaged during the time the theater was closed so we will be able to refurbish the walls to their original elegance."

Mr. Koenrich added that the color scheme will also follow the one used when the theater opened, of deep burgundies and rich wine shades that will accent the massive gold and crystal chandelier in the main auditorium.

"There is no other theater like this in this town, and this is what we want to bring back," said Mr. Koenrich," and the best thing about this time is that it, will belong to the community."

Monday night's opening was also a nostalgic ray of hope for many long-time Washingtonians. In its heyday, the Lincoln was christened "the finest theater of its kind for colored people anywhere", and showcased the artistry of Bessie Smith; Bill "Bojangles" Robinson; Sarah Vaughn and Lionel Hampton. Jazz great W.C. Handy once served as organist when the Lincoln featured silent films in the 1920's.

But the music stopped in 1968, and suddenly the Lincoln found itself the victim of an era of frustration and protests, as did many U Street businesses. After nearly half-a-century, the Lincoln — the arena that once hosted the greats and those who wanted to be next to them — was dead. A brief attempt to revive the Lincoln as a movie theater in the early 1970's was met with minimal success; never attracting its original following.

"You have to understand that U Street was everything, it was the place to be", said Lottie Miller who attended galas at the theater's Colonnade, an opulent ballroom encased in mirrors and intricate silver etchings in the building's lower level. "And anybody just couldn't go there", Mrs. Miller, now 71 added. "You had to be somebody just to get in."

A glance at the Lincoln's roster of scheduled events confirms this fact. During its peak, each of the District's leading black social and fraternal organizations held court there at various parties and soirees. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt even made an annual appearance at the Presidents Wives Ball.

Today's vision for the Lincoln, however, is a little less lofty. The theater will be restored to a full performance arena that will house its own resident ensemble company. An experimental theater training workshop is also planned.

"I'm not really a theater person, but its good to see this place come alive again," said a Third District police officer. "It's mighty good indeed, and a welcome sight."

This sensational advertisement announced a Bette Davis tear-jerker at the theatre that also featured Oscar-winning actress, Hattie McDaniel in a supporting role.

"Swing's Handy Man"
COLONNADE
SUNDAY, JUNE 14
LIONEL HAMPTON
.World's Greatest Vibra-Harp. and Drum Star and his
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You raved about him at the theatre, but hear 'im at a dance
BEFORE 10 P.M. on date 75c
ADMISSION 85c. incl. tax

At Guardsmen Ball

D.C. Socialites profile at one of the Lincoln Colonade's many balls. Notes one attendee, "It was the place to be seen."

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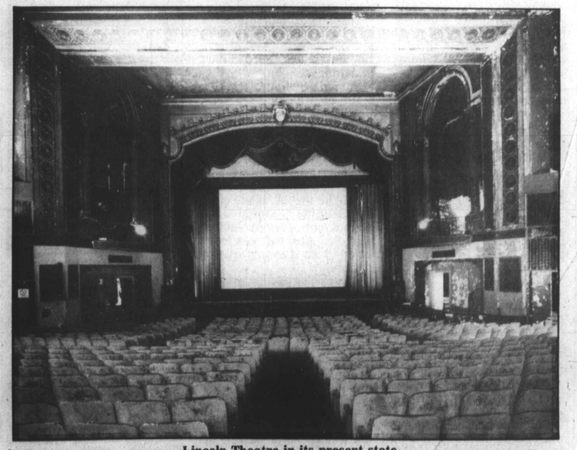
Poster advertising the great Al Jolson.



Lincoln Theatre in its present state.

Delano Lewis, president of the Washington Board of Trade, Fran Cohen, director of the Lincoln Theatre Project, noted choreographer Mike Malone and Dwight Ellis.