'One Man Band' – Ronnie Dyson

Ronnie Dyson on "Soul Unlimited" May 5

Ronnie Dyson has always been within a fingernail of total national stardom. (Watch for him on "Soul Unlimited," May 5).

It almost happened for him in "Hair," the first Broadway play presentation of the new counterculture. The tune "Aquarius" was written especially for him. And though he was remembered for his rendition of the song (which turned out to be recorded by countless others), the significance of the play itself somewhat overshadowed his individual performance.

It almost happened for him with "(If You Let Me Make Love To You) Why Can't I Touch You?" The tune proved to be a major hit, but there was no immediate follow-up single with the same strength to maintain the momentum of the artist.

It even almost happened for him with his recording of a Pepsi Cola commercial (sure you can hum it, can't you?), which was probably his most "commercial" tune to date (no pun intended).

Now it appears that "almosts" are ready to be thrown out the window. Known to be a great stage act, Dyson now has a catalyst which will possibly bring him the success and credit he so rightfully deserves — producer-writer Thom Bell, and one hell of an album (and single) "One Man Band."

"I feel very good about with Thom Bell. He's probably the hottest producer in the world today," stated Dyson, still possessing the same baby face which gleamed throughout his two-year hitch with "Hair." "His writing partner, Linda Creed, also helped a great deal with the album. Not only did she co-write four of the tunes, she re-mixed six songs which were recorded on other sessions. They're both dynamic people."

On having a record climbing the music charts for the first time in quite a while, Dyson exclaimed, "It feels great. But I knew it was going to happen because of Thom Bell and Linda Creed. They made me feel really comfortable, and the songs were right. I just felt it had to happen."

Born in Washington, D.C., Ronnie and his family moved to Brooklyn when he was a year old. Coming from a very religious family, Dyson began singing very early. And, at age five, he entered a local talent show at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Singing one of his favorite tunes, "Why Do Fools Fall in Love?," Ronnie discovered singing before an audience really did things for him, and he wanted to pursue it more.

And his mother one fan was his mother, who was instrumental in Ronnie receiving his first break.

"She used to work for a telephone answering service," he remembered, "and took messages for people in show business. One day she took a message from a person who was in the process of moving a play on Broadway and was looking for young actors who could sing. She told the man of Ronnie's abilities, and the man in return asked her to bring her son down for rehearsals the next day to try out for one of the parts."

His audition turned out to be most successful, and Ronnie Dyson saw himself landing a role in "Hair." As a result, Jerry Ragni and Galt McDermott wrote "Aquarius" for their new star. It was the smash of the new show.

A few years later, Ronnie did a brief role in a parody on commercials in the underground film, "Putney Swope." He also sang the title song for the motion picture, "Fortune in Men's Eyes."

Since then, he has appeared on numerous television shows, such as "The Merv Griffin Show" over 100 times, "The Tonight Show," "The Mike Douglas Show" and "The David Frost Show."

Ronnie Dyson, at 22 years old, has covered a great deal of musical territory. "I feel, however, there is much more for me to learn, much more for me to see, much more for me to do. So I've got a nice way to go before I do it all."

What's Happening

by IDA Peters

RICHARD ROUNDTREE is whipped by bounty hunter Nigel Davenport as Roy Thinnes silently watches in "Charley-One-Eye." The film is a dramatic allegory about two outcasts drawn together by chance, struggling to survive in the violent world around them.

"SAVE THE CHILDREN"

Returning to the Lyric Theater on May 18 will be the smash musical, "Save the Children" by Ruteena Blake — back by popular demand. This will be the third production of the musical and its second engagement at the Lyric.

It will be recalled that the musical was staged quite successfully last October at the Lyric receiving favorable reviews.

"Save the Children" is a musical drama which highlights several of the factors which tend to imprison inner city children in a condition of virtual, perpetual helplessness — drugs, prostitution, fatherless homes, disease, inferior education, etc.

Featured in the cast are veterans Princeton McLure (Pastor Willis, Verna Day (Mrs. Banks, dancers Travis Winkey and Wilma Pettaway and the music of the ever popular "Frankie and the Spindles."

Tony Yarborough (Kevin and Denise Smith (Janese are teenagers with lead roles who performed so admirably in the last production. Frederika Mattews

Most of the proceeds from this production are serving to be making her debut as Mrs. Barclay.

marked for the group's new repertoire, the [illegible] "The Little Theater Movement" which gets underway this summer with drama workshops in Columbia and Baltimore.

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On two Saturdays and Sundays in mid-May, the world famous tuliary gardens and home of Mr. Harvey Ludewig, near Baltimore, will be open for public viewing. Dates are May 12 and 13, also May 19 and 20.

On the twenty-three acres of Pleasant Valley Farm, the topiary is the headline attraction, but over a dozen other specialty gardens deserve equal attention.

Mr. Ladew's "Pleasant Valley Farm" is on Route 143, the Jarrettsville Pike, 16 miles north of Towson, Maryland. All proceeds benefit the Greater Baltimore Medical Center.

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"BLACK BART"

Count Basie has been signed by producer Michael Hertzberg to play in a key scene of Warner Bros. "Black Bart," the comedy-western being directed by Mel Brooks and starring Cleavon Little in the title role.

Basie and his band will trek to the Mojave Desert for location filming of their scenes for the Technicolor-Panavision motion picture which also stars Gene Wilder, Slim Pickens, Harvey Korman and Madeline Kahn.

"Black Bart" was written by Brooks, Andy Bergman, Richard Pryor, Norman Steinberg and Alan Uger from a story by Bergman.

SCREAM

"Scream, Blacula, Scream" is the release title for the American International terror feature starring William Marshall in

(Continued On Page D-37)

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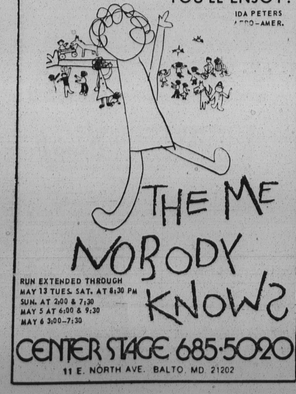

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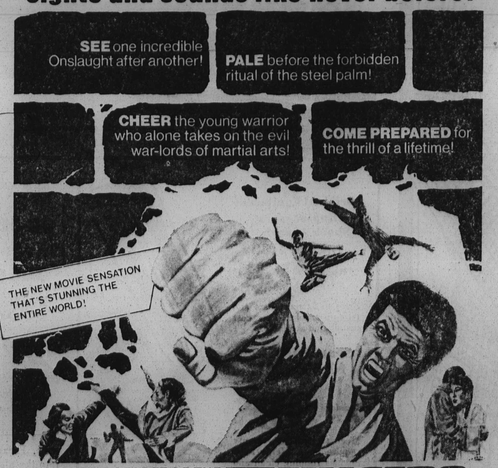

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"UP WITH PEOPLE" performing "Let All The People In". They will give two fund-raising concerts for the Police Boys Club, May 4-5 at the Civic Center.

SEASONED TRIO BACKS

Brenda Sykes

When Brenda Sykes makes her singing debut in "Cleopatra Jones" she will have the solid backing of a trio of young ladies whose voices are as lovely as they are.

Brenda plays Tiffany in the Warner Bros. action-thriller which stars Tamara Dobson in the title role, with Bernie Casey, Shelley Winters and Antonio Fargas also starring.

Tiffany is the vocalist in a nightclub owned by her underworld boyfriend. She is innocently caught up in the violent clash between Cleopatra Jones and Mommy (played by Shelly Winters) who heads a narcotics ring.

Although Brenda has appeared in ten films, she has never before been called upon to sing. But any misgivings she may have had faded after being coached by Gene Taft, Roger Kellaway and by Eddie Kendricks, who is music arranger for Connie Stevens' night club act.

Brenda sings that oldie but goodie, "Am I Blue?" and "Swing Down Sweet Chariot," both garbed in shiny new arrangements by Kendricks.

Singing background in the scene are Patti e Brooks, Deborah Lindsey and Patrice Holloway.

Individually, each of these beauties is loaded with talent and, because of their youth, the total number of years experience they have is almost unbelievable — until they open their mouths to sing.

Miss Holloway is a former member of Josie and the Pussycats, an integrated black, white and Oriental vocal group that no longer exists. On the sound track of "Black Caesar," a film scored by James Brown, she sings the song, "Big Daddy."

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She appeared with Aretha Franklin on a recent Flip Wilson Show and has toured with Bobby Darin, Wayne Newton and Connie Stevens.

A veteran background vocalist, Pattie Brooks has worked with such musical giants as Henry Mancini, Pearl Bailey, Bobby Darin and the Smothers Brothers. Miss Brooks has also appeared in plays, including the production of "Voice from Another Season" at UCLA's Royce Hall.

The third member of the trio backing Brenda Sykes is Deborah Lindsey, who earned a BA in speech from Pepperdine College before becoming a professional vocalist. She appeared in the recent NBC special, "We've Only Just Begun."

More What's happening

(Continued From Page D-36)

the title role, a sequel to the recent box-office hit "Blacula."

"Scream, Blacula, Scream" was filmed with the temporary title of "Blacula II." In addition to Marshall the stars are Pam Grier, Don Mitchell, Michael Conrad, Janee Michele and Bernie Hamilton. It was directed by Bob Kelljan for producer Joseph T. Naar, and will be released June 27.

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SHEILA FRAZIER

Sheila Frazier has been signed for the feminine lead in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's "The Super Cops" it was announced by producer William Belasco. Sheila joins Ron Leibman and David Selby in the true story of two cops who wore police uniforms to makes it legal but had to write their own rules for crushing crime in New York. Gordon Parks directs the film which began production in Brooklyn this week.

Sheila starred with Ron O'Neal in "Super Fly" and again in "Super Fly Two," which will be released in June.

The exciting and often hilarious exploits of two officers, Pete Greenberg and Bob Hantz, named "Batman and Robin" by their fellow officers and the press, are related in the book "The Super Cops," by L. H. Whittemore. In the screenplay by Lorenzo Semple Jr. Leibman plays Greenberg and Selby portrays Hantz. Sheila Frazier plays Sara, a girl whose relationship with Greenberg teaches him to "think black."

NORTH STAR
MAX JULIEN

Actor Max Julien, star of the current film "The Mack," will be a special guest on WBAL-TV's "North Star" series, Sunday, April 29 at 6-7 p.m. on TV 11. The program also marks the on-air debut of Edith House who joins TV 11's Jan Dates as "North Star" co-hostess and co-producer.

Julien will be discussing his impressions of black movies today, his career and his personal reasons for making "The Mack."

Co-hostesses Jan Dates and Edith House will interview author George Cain about his book "Blueschild Baby." Newly published, it focuses on the devastating effects of drug addiction.

Also featured will be David Greene whose local consulting firm has been helping minority people start their own businesses. This free public service is under the auspices of the Federal Office of Minority Business Enterprises.

Baltimorean Noel Markridge will tell why he left the lucrative business world to teach in a local junior high school. "North Star" visits his class to observe how his teaching has inspired the students there.

Mrs. Ruby Gill, representing the Baltimore chapter of CARP (National Organization of Consumers Against Rising Prices) will be on hand to describe the tactics and goals of the meat boycott.

"North Star" is a weekly presentation of the WBAL-TV Community Service Department.

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Laurel and Hardy in "Sons of the Desert" and "Busy Bodies," two of their best, will be featured by the Tuesday Night Series of Catonsville Community College on May 1st. The films will be shown at 8 p.m. in the Barn Theatre on the college campus, at 800 S. Rolling Road, and the public is invited at no charge.

ASSASSINS surround Lo Lieh in a scene from "5 Fingers of Death." Filmed in Hong Kong it's the story of a young master of the martial arts who learns the secret of the Iron Hand and battles his way to the championship of China.

GERRI DEAN is choreographer for "The Me No-Knows" now at Center Stage.

Enoch PRATT

(Week of April 29-May 5)

MONDAY, APRIL 30

"Stamps, a Nation's Calling Card," film at the main Pratt Library, Wheeler Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

"Stamps and Stamp Collecting," by Earl C. Lynch, at the main Pratt Library, Wheeler Auditorium, 7:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, MAY 3

"The Man in the White Suit," film at Pratt Library's Northwood Branch, 2:00 p.m. "World Series 1906," film at the Pratt Library's Pennsylvania Avenue Branch, 3:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, MAY 5

"Hello . . . I Love You" and "Keep the Change," films at the main Pratt Library, Wheeler Auditorium, 2:00 p.m.

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