'Fat Daddy', Paul Johnson was 'giant' of a man

By Ida Peters

Expressions of sympathy from greats and near greats in the record industry have been pouring into the AFRO ever since news was received from Los Angeles that Paul 'Fat Daddy' Johnson had died of a heart attack and kidney complications in Brentman Hospital.

At his death he was R and B national promotion director for Capitol Records based in Los - Angeles.

Kelson (Chop Chop) Fisher recalled this week how Paul Johnson broke into the radio field. He said that Paul was the only native Baltimorean to ever start at the bottom in radio and make it to the top.

During his days at Douglass High School and while attending Morgan he used to follow Chop Chop Fisher, then with WSID around, helping out at Left Bank Jazz concerts at the old Morgan Hall which featured Art Blakey and Sonny Stitt on Sundays.

He showed great promise and Fisher got him a job on a radio station in Danville, Va. There he stood the town on its collective ear.

He came back to Baltimore and WSID promoting shows at the Royal Theatre. He was Mr. Show Biz himself and kept putting on weight acquiring the name "Fat Daddy."

Today, we have discos with D.J.s. But, back in the 1960s Fat Daddy was putting on discos for kids at the New Albert Hall . . . only they called them "Record Hops."

He then went to WITH, progressing all the while, according to Fisher and finally landed at WWIN.

By 1966, he was the No. 5 DJ in the nation and was named among the top 40 DJs by Esquire Magazine.

Each week he featured queens from various high schools in addition to his record hops and he had fan clubs all over the city.

His only record is "I'm Fat Daddy, I'm Santa Claus." Even though Fat Daddy left Baltimore in 1971, seven years later, young and old are still singing his song:

"I'm Fat Daddy; I'm Santa Claus; I'm the reindeer's boss; I pack my bag with goodies and toys. I'm on my way to greet all the good little girlies and boys."

In 1971, Paul Johnson left WWIN to accept the post of national promotion director for Atlantic Records in New York.

When Motown moved from Detroit to Los Angeles, he joined them as national promotion director and moved to California.

In June 1977 he moved to Capitol Records.

Bruce Wendell, vice-president of promotion for Capitol Records, said from California that "although Paul was a newcomer to Capitol, to us and to the industry at large, he was a well-known professional.

"Among the host of many honors, he received the Bill Gavin Award for No. 1 Broadcaster six times and Promotion Man of the Year Award from the National Association of Television and Radio Artists, 1973, in New Orleans.

Mary Clayburn of WWIN who worked with Fat Daddy for three years remembers him as a very gentle and kind man. At the NATRA conventions, where she is a national officer, she remembers he was always asked to introduce the main speakers . . . the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Ben Hooks . . . and his very long, well chosen words were always the highlight of the convention. "He was always business-like, cordial and not full of hot jive," she said.

Don Brooks, program director for WWIN, said that Paul Johnson's death is a "great loss in the field of communications. He was an inspiration to all young blacks."

Jack Wellman, regional director for Capitol Records in Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia, who will lead a contingent of national radio personalities to the funeral Saturday, including George Woods, Jo 'Butterball' Tamburro and Jo Loris, editor of Impact, said:

"Paul Johnson was a straight-forward person who was admired and respected by his colleagues for his professional approach to all aspects of the record industry.

Bob Jones, director of press and publicity at Motown in Los Angeles, said:

"Paul was one of the most unique men I've met and I wish a bit of his character would rub off on others."

When he became the great DJ, he still took time to help community groups raise funds and he was always ready to respond when we called on him for Jack and Jill Teen activities.

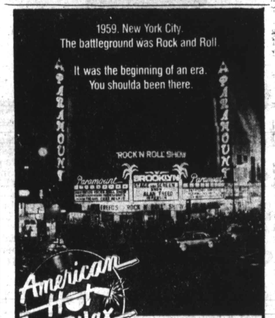
And, even after he became great on the national field, he still took time to drop by AFRO Public Relations . . . to say hi. May he rest in Peace.

1971 farewell party for "Fat Daddy" when he left Baltimore's WWIN to join Atlantic Records. From left, Mr. and Mrs. Oliver (Julia) Johnson; Paul and wife, Carole and Al Jefferson.

With first wife, Marion. They were married at Enon Baptist Church June 2, 1963 and divorced around 1967.

Paul Johnson and Thom Bell receive 1973 Golden Mike Awards.

1956 — Paul Johnson, center, at Douglass High School where he was a member of the A CAppella Choir and the Mello Keys. From left, Juggy Stokes and John Henderson.



The CC man is back.
He's young. He's confident.
He's looking good. Drinking good.
Canadian Club Whisky.
Look who's drinking Canadian Club now.

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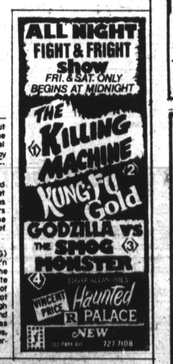
Movie Quickies

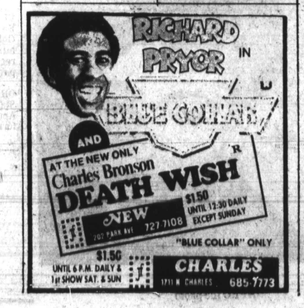
By Ida Peters
AFRO Entertainment Editor

CROSSED SWORDS: (PG) — Warner Brothers drama about two youngsters who exchange clothes and frolic among the royal and rowdy based on novel by Mark Twain. Stars George C. Scott and Raquel Welch.

BLUE COLLAR: (R) — Richard Pryor, Harvey Kitel and Yaphet Kotto give powerful performances in a profile of automobile workers banging their heads against the monotony and corruption of factory life.

AMERICAN HOT WAX: (PG) — Slightly twisted story on rock'n roll DJ Alan Freed and how he introduced black music to white teenagers in the 1950s. Hints of payola and how black groups got conned out of royalties through ignorance. Stars Chuck Berry and Screamin' Jay Hawkins as themselves and two new groups, The Delights and the Chasterfields.





'Shenandoah'... about different kind of man

—By Ida Peters

It's kind of hard to describe a Tony winning musical like "Shenandoah".

The Philip Rose, Gloria and Louis Sher production starring John Raitt opened a three - week run at the Mechanic Theatre this past Tuesday.

Philip Rose the director made his Broadway debut with "A Raisin In The Sun" and "Purlie":

"Shenandoah" seems to have a wishy - washy message, 16 mostly forgettable musical numbers and it takes a long time . . . from 8:10 to about 10:30 p.m. to say what it has to say, then it just stops as if the authors and actors have run out of gas.

The story is about a different kind of white Southern farmer. He owns no slaves. The story is about his family, his five sons and daughter, their life on the 500 acre farm built through hard work over many years in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia during the Civil War.

This was the war between the states (1861 - 65) that freed the slaves which ended up with more than 600,000 casualties, only surpassed in history by the million American casualties during World War II.

"Shenandoah" doesn't dwell on the gory conflict. John Raitt, the farmer

Cal Boney ...showstopper

Charlie Anderson advances the story by talking out his problems nd conflicts at his dead wife's grave.

He resists all efforts of his slave - owning neighbors to involve his sons in the Confederate side calling all war opens season on strangers" and that he owes no duty to the State of Virginia or his neighbors.

His family is always late for church foretelling the fact that the family will be late for the war and the tragic conflict.

The slave owning neighbors are introduced through 11 - year - old Gabriel (Cal Boney) a slave and playmate of the youngest Anderson son (Douglas Grober).

Their duet, "Why Am I Me", is one of the bright lights in this production

Gabriel gets most of the few laughs given up by this opening night audience when he opines that his massa looks on him as "inventory." In talking with the Anderson "Boy" about what church is like "Massa says niggers can sing and pray 'til they're white in the face, but it ain't gonna do them any good."

Of course when Union soldiers kidnap Boy and raiders shoot his son and rape the daughter, Farmer Anderson (Raitt) gets just as violent as his neighbors. He just objected to the War . . . not killing and fighting.

Musically, the show opens with "Raise the Flag of Dixie" by Confederate and Union soldiers in mock battle, giving equal time to everybody.

Highlight of Act II is the number "Freedom" sung by Gabriel and Anne (Lola - Belle Smith). Here he tells Missy he is free and is off to Georgia and Mississippi to find his folks. A tearjerker . . . and the audience response was so great, they were called for an encore.

Gary Geld who composed the music for "Shenandoah" and Peter Udell the lyricist and co - author, also collaborated on the Broadway musical, "Purlie".

Scenery by C. Murawski in imaginative and innovative. For theatre buffs he had dining room and bedroom sets on rollers with silhouetted frames to suggest a front porch dropping from overhead.

"Shenandoah" won't make anybody mad but you won't get too excited either.

Fri., April 7
Hampden Center: Preschool story hour, 10 a.m.
Canton Center: Preschool story Hour, 10:30 a.m.
Dundalk Avenue Branch: Films — hour, 11 a.m.

—"All This and Rabbit Stew" at 1 "Phillip and the White Colt," at 3 p.m.

Sat., April 8
Central Library, Children's Department: Preschool story hour, 11 a.m.

... and all that Jazz

By Bob Matthews

For 20 years, Milt Jackson, exemplified the vibraphone, while playing with the Modern Jazz Quartet. Theirs was such a subdued, cool type of jazz, that it was easy to forget that Milt could "get down."

And he did.

Happened at the Left Bank Jazz Society's regular Sunday afternoon bash, and Milt proved that he has no peer in vibes execution.

LBJS patrons reaped the benefits of a week of rehearsal, for Milt et al had just finished a week at Blues Alley in D.C. before playing the Baltimore set.

Milt stopped by the corner during one of the intermissions, and settled a mild argument among the denizens.

The MJQ officially disbanded in July of 1974. That was the question we needed answered.

You might say that Milt himself was the reason for the breakup, for as he put it, "we had all this prestige, but I had very little money in the pocket."

As much as we enjoyed his work with the MJQ, Milt is now a more rounded player — more expressive, and much less confined in his play.

All the tunes were familiar, as might be expected with a group which has been together only a short while, but imagine if you will how it must have sounded with these classic tunes:

"Poor Butterfly," "St. Thomas," "Impressions," "I Thought About You," "Feelings," "John Brown's Body," among the many others.

Oddly enough, the most impressive stint to me, came with a no - name simple 12 - bar blues, that the group really got a chance to stretch out on.

Buck Hill on tenor sax, reminded that he is a true explosive force, and can hold his own in any company. Steve Novasel was on bass and Bernard Sweetney on drums.

They are both quite familiar to jazz buffs in the Washington - Baltimore corridor.

Reuben Brown on piano was a bit of a surprise to this corner, but he exemplified the current trend toward more block chord changes in solos, rather than the tinkling, frilly runs.

And, he's good at it.

Next week the Leon Thomas Sextet heaves into view at LBJS.

Thomas, albeit a consummate musician, prefers to just sing these days.

He rose to fame among the high - energy fusion fans, when he began to yodel during vocal stints.

You just can't capture the entire flavor of his warblings on recordings. Somehow, it really doesn't come through.

Last time he played LBJS, was a revelation. Thomas provided some stomp - down, good jazz, and satisfied the jazz - rock fans too.

TV Watching

...what Reggie said to Barbara

At the New York Yankees spring training camp in Ft. Lauderdale, Ms. Walters talked to Reggie Jackson about his self-image, and his painful experience during his controversial first season with the Yankees last year.

REGGIE: I just couldn't handle the pressure. I was just getting whipped. I was getting beat, you know. I was a stranger. I was lost in a town; I was lost philosophically. I was crumbled emotionally. I didn't know what to do. I turned the radio on and it was bad news. When I looked in the paper, it was a knock. When I went to the ball park, nobody would talk. When I got a hit, the people booed. When I struck out, they yelled louder. When I caught a ball, they laughed.

BARBARA WALTERS: Do you think you're the best ballplayer?

REGGIE: No, I would say that when the pressure's on, I can play with anybody. But I'm not gifted with agility and all-around talent to be the best.

BARBARA WALTERS: Are you the best on the Yankees?

REGGIE: I don't know whether I'd say that because the guy (Thurman) Munson can play

A concluding word - association game ends with this exchange:

BARBARA WALTERS: Hate.
REGGIE: Uh-uh
BARBARA WALTERS: Defeat.
REGGIE: No.
BARBARA WALTERS: Home run.
REGGIE: Me.

FRIDAY

By Vanessa Johnson

Donny and Marie: Guests tonight are Redd Foxx, Kris Kristofferson, Rita Coolidge and Paul Lynde. 8:00-9:00 p.m.-ABC.

CPO Sharkey: Captain Buckner is aghast when the brass directs him to take on Sharkey as his personal aide and adviser. 8:30-9:00 p.m.-CBS.

Boxing: Monroe Brooks (37-3-2) defends his North American super lightweight title against Bruce Curry (15-2) in the main event, scheduled for 12 rounds, at Las Vegas. 11:45-1:00 a.m.-CBS.

Midnight Special: Guest host is Roger Miller with K.C. and the Sunshine Band.

SATURDAY

Pat Albert: The gang learns that size doesn't make the man in this story. 12:00-12:30 p.m. - CBS.

American Bandstand: Performances by Ashford and Simpson ("Don't Cost You Nothing," "By Way of Love's Express.") 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. Channel 7.

Soul Train: Johnny Mathis and Deniece Williams are the guests today. 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. - Channel 5.

The Jeffersons: The Jefferson household is thrown into a state of upheaval by the constant bickering of two unexpected guests, Florence's parents. 8:00 - 8:30 p.m. - CBS.

Heatwave out to burn you

by Frederick I. Douglass

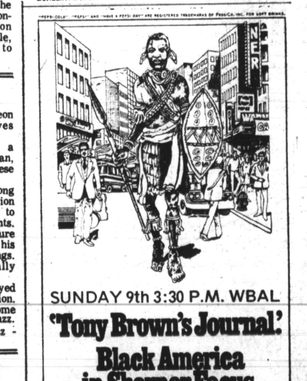
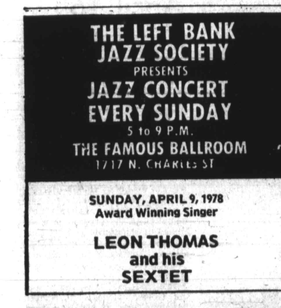
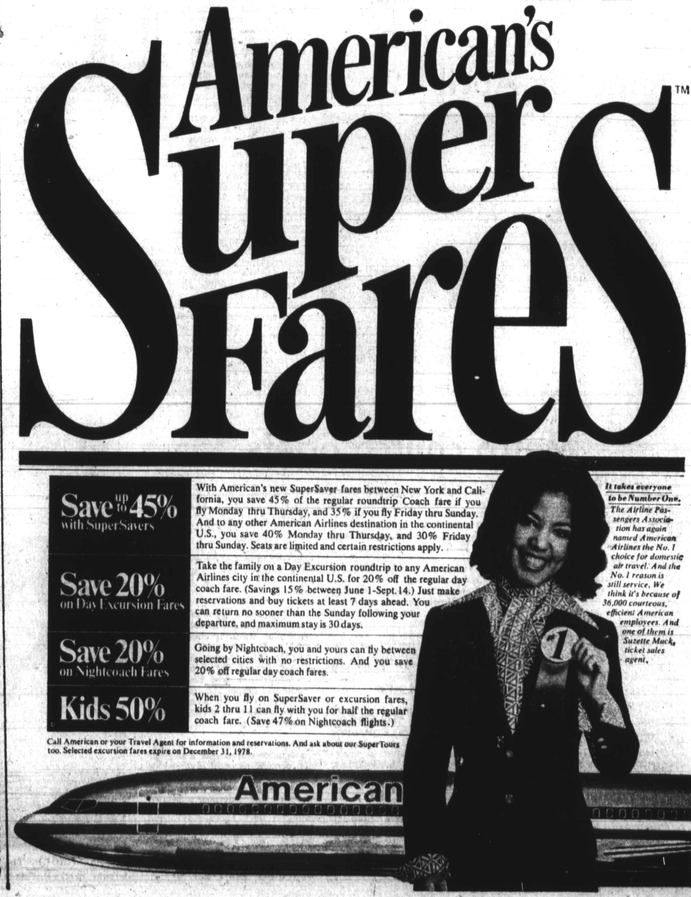
Heatwave, the group that sizzled and griddled the brothers and sisters in 1977 with "Boogie Nights" plus the ballad "Always and Forever," is out to burn up your mind while agitating you with the scorching sounds found on the new LP "Central Heating."

The stepping out track on the album is "The Groove Line," an up - tempo smoker that already is copping beaucoup airplay in the Baltimore - Washington area.

Opening with interplay between organ, guitar and drums, the tune features a torrid bass line that will penetrate your spine. The harmony on "The Groove Line" is tight and the pulsating beat is just right for discoing this way and that way.

When you play this jam crank the bass on your quadraphonic system up to the max, add a taste of treble, and turn the volume up because these sounds were meant to be played loud. If you live in an apartment building, your neighbors will be banging on your door or beating on the walls, asking you to either increase the decibel level or let them inside to share the fiery sounds of Heatwave.

Another hellfire tune on the LP is "Party Poops" which admonishes you to stop leaning on the wall and move to the disco groove. And the album's title track "Central Heating" is a real party hearty jam, just right for keeping the festivities going.

This is the kind of album that you can play from end to end and the party will keep going. Heatwave also cooks on "Send Out for Sunshine," a tune that features churning bass riffs and polyrhythmic pounding on the drums.

When the time comes to slow down the pace, Heatwave has some smooth ballads for you that are ideal for close encounters of the most intimate kind when the party lights are turned down low and everyone is cheek - to - cheek. "Happiness and Togetherness" is a mellow tune that is on the same level as the group's hit "Always and Forever." You'll be hearing a lot of this jam. "Mind Blowing Decisions" is one of those tunes that can be danced to arm in arm or even with some slick Latin Hustle steps, depending on what kind of mood you are in and it has considerable Top - 40 potential.