© 1981 Liggett & Myers Tobacco Company, Inc

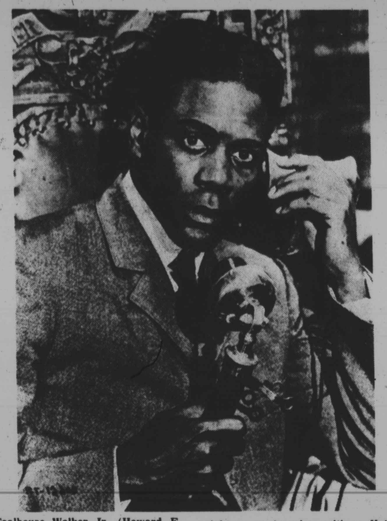
Introducing
the world's most elegant menthol.

OMNI
Luxury Lights 100's
Menthol never felt richer.

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

Omni: 9 mg. "tar", 0.9 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC Method.

SHOWTIME



Coalhouse Walker Jr. (Howard E. Rollins) plays the kind of person who will kill for what he believes is his right as an American citizen. He's bad!

'Ragtime' . . . breakthrough for Howard E. Rollins

IDA PETERS

It is 1906. A world in transition. New fangled automobiles are frightening the horses, entertainment has taken on a different dimension with the birth of the nickelodeon.

A time of mass immigration from Europe, Gibson Girls and ragtime music was the rage and underlined the comedy and tragedy of New York City.

This is the background for the sure to be Christmas hit "Ragtime", a Dino De Laurentis Presentation of a Milos Forman Film being released by Paramount Pictures and starring James Cagney as Rheinlander Waldo as police commissioner.

Other stars are Elizabeth McGovern, Pat O'Brien, Donald O'Connor, Debbie Allen, Moses Gunn and Norman Mailer.

But the one who turns in the most outstanding performance is Baltimore's own Howard E. Rollins Jr. as Coalhouse Walker Jr. He has the role of a successful piano player who gets his girlfriend (Debbie Allen) in trouble. She is taken in by a white family and his efforts to marry her and take care of his baby sets off a wave of terror.

In a recent interview at the Hilton Hotel after screening of "Ragtime" Rollins explained that the role of Coalhouse Walker is a central thread running through the whole "Ragtime" story. After the screening for the press, his friend of many years, Steve Yaeger and his mother were in tears.

People in the industry say that Howard Rollins turns in an Academy winning performance in "Ragtime".

AFRO: What did James Cagney say to you?

Rollins: He said "if I didn't get an Oscar nomination, he would quit the business", I think the role of Coalhouse Walker is one of the best roles that a black actor has had for 10 years. I think "Ragtime" is going to be a breakthrough for black actors. For once, all the black characters act on principle and behave with dignity".

AFRO: How is Debbie Allen to work with?

Rollins: "She is an easy woman to work with and we had a mutual feeling that the play was larger than ourselves.

— —

Howard E. Rollins, Jr. is the son a retired steelworker and his family still make their home on E. North Ave. He got his start with the Spotlighters Theatre in 1967 under Steve Yaeger and has appeared at the Kennedy Center in "The Mighty Gents" and at Center Stage in "G.R. Point".

He enrolled at Towson State College to study French and drama, appearing in the school's productions beginning with his freshman year. After college, it was his sister-in-law who persuaded him that he had to go to the proving ground. That was New York City. "I've grown to love the place. Like London, one of the few places in the world, if you make it there, you'll make it anywhere".

His acting coach Clay Steveson from the Hartford University Stage group impressed on him the importance of variety. "I wanted to be a chameleon, cover every experience in the human condition". Several prime time television productions, appeared as Andrew Young in the Abby Mann CBS miniseries "King" and as George Haley in "Roots II: The Second Generation".

Four straight years in television's "Our Street" and the soap opera "Edge of Night" made him familiar with camera techniques. "With three lenses on you, you have to tell the truth; there's no way you can lie. On-camera work speaks its own truth."

Mrs. Howard E. Rollins Sr. smiles proudly when she accepted Arena Players Award in 1978.

Howard E. Rollins Jr. has grown his mustache back and talks with AFRO during VIP visit last month. (Photo by Ida Peters)

Sylvester Campbell, Sandra Fortune in 'Nutcracker'

No Christmas would be complete without "The Nutcracker". On Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 19 and 20, the Peabody Preparatory and the Maryland Regional Ballet with Essex Community College will present an all-Maryland production of this holiday favorite at Essex Community College. Performances will be at 2 and 7 p.m. each day.

Featured in "The Nutcracker" are Sylvester Campbell, soloist with the Maryland Ballet and head of the dance department at the Baltimore School for the Performing Arts, and Sandra Fortune, prima ballerina of the Capitol Ballet Company.

Sylvester Campbell, a native of Washington, D.C., received his early training in dance at the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet. A former member of Ward Fleming's New York Negro Ballet Company, the Royal Netherlands Ballet and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Mr. Campbell was the Artistic Associate of the Capitol Ballet in 1975-76.

He has also made guest appearances with the Bejart 20th Century Ballet Company of Belgium, Deutsche Oper Berlin and the Dublin Theatre Ballet, and has frequently performed with the Capitol Ballet Company.

Sandra Fortune also began her dance training at the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet. A favorite of Washington audiences, Miss Fortune was the first black female dancer to compete in Moscow's Second International Ballet Competition. She currently teaches ballet at the Duke Ellington High School for the Performing Arts and at the Jones-Haywood School.

Mr. Campbell and Miss Fortune have partnered several times in the past. They performed together in July, 1974 at the International Ballet Competition in Varna, Bulgaria, where their Don Quixote Pas de Deux was termed a "show stopper". They have also previously performed "The Nutcracker" with the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

Sylvester Campbell and Sandra Fortune featured soloists at Essex Community College

Mechanic

Cast and band of "One Mo' Time!" are (L to R) Adjora Faith (Thelma), Albert Bemis (Piano); Yvonne Kersey (Bertha) Ronald "Smokey" Stevens (Papa Du), Stanley Stevens (drums), Manny Boyd (clarinet), Sam Baker (Theatre Owner), John Brunious (trumpet) Lynne Clifton Allen (Ma Reed) and Alton Carson (tuba).

...and all that Jazz

By Bob Matthews

Interesting situation cropped up this week, as word reached us that Bob Haynes at the Sportsmens Lounge was completely upset over the New Year's Eve cancellation of vocalist Bill Harris.

Bill has played the Sportsmens Lounge off and on for many weeks this year, and had a verbal agreement to do the New Years eve gig. But, an engagement in Columbia, MD for twice as much money cropped up.

What to do? There is a commitment with the people that have stuck by you over the year, yet a chance to earn some much needed money. The Columbia set would put you in front of a totally different audience, which would be good for the career.

So this is the problem. Haynes feels that there is a definite obligation in honoring a verbal agreement, plus a sense of loyalty that should prevail.

Bill feels this is an opportunity that cannot be overlooked. The fee for the job allows him to hire additional and different musicians and broaden his horizons.

Won't attempt to say who is right, for the situation is not unique—it happens regularly each year—and makes no one happy, neither the artist nor the club owner.

At any rate, Bill will be headlining at the Sportsmen's Lounge this weekend, with Charlie Covington, piano; John Simms, lead guitar; Darryl Dickerson, drums; Mark Easley, bass, and Miss Jennell Fisher, backup vocals.

The Saturday afternoon jazz jam will be without live music this weekend, although classic jazz recordings will be played, and patrons are being urged to bring in an album to be played.

Bill Harris

— —

At The Ritz this weekend, Terry Hollinger, vocalist, will occupy the podium in the Penthouse. She is a former singer with the Softones, who dropped out to become a mother, and is now back on the music scene.

Oddly enough, she will be followed on Christmas weekend by The Softones, who will play through Sunday night. And, the same group will be on hand for New Year's eve festivities.

— —

At Gatsby's, Mirage is the group on hand for this weekend, with no scheduling at this point for Christmas weekend. On New Year's eve, however, Terry Hollinger is the featured attraction. More on this next week.

— —

The Closet is on hold for the weekend, according to Henry Baker, who is a little trepidatious because of the unsettled weather situation.

If it looks like clear weather in the offing, they will probably bring in the Harold White trio. Christmas week is firm, however, with Gary Bartz on tap through Sunday the 27th.

New Year's eve will find Mickey and Shirley Fields headlining at the club.

— —

Keep forgetting to mention what's going on at the Garrison Lounge on Thursday nights, for have caught a couple of sessions there, and it is really worthy of note.

Joe Williams brings in his vast collection of jazz albums, and plays continuous music (jazz, of course) from 7 p.m. until he gets tired.

And, it has really caught on. In fact, you have to get there a bit early in order to get a seat. Kinda amusing to watch the reaction when Joe plays some of the old jazz classics. 'Tis really an education.

By now you know there is a new thing happening at the Sphinx Club, in that they no longer feature live entertainment on weekends. Must admit we kinda miss it, however.

It was kind of fun to hear some of the straight ahead jazz you could dance to played at the club. And, some of the old timers got a chance to show they could still get down.

But—we'll give the new format a chance—who knows, perhaps this is the current thing. We're watching.

Peabo Bryson

Peabo Bryson has been singing about love since he was 12 years old, and has been transmitting his message on concert stages around the world since he turned 16.

Peabo has developed into one of the smoothest and most charismatic songwriter - stylists of our time, and his warmth and positive energy burst right through the grooves of his records.

Peabo's new "I Am Love" album is the embodiment of all the joy and happiness that motivates Peabo Bryson to sing his songs to the world. The message comes through loud and clear on these eight Bryson original compositions (he penned "Move Your Body" with his brother Chuck): silky-smooth, highly-polished and always ending on the up note.

The ballads are creamy, particularly the title cut, which was prepped as a rush-preview single and is already scaling the charts, and the up-beat numbers crackle with positive energy. The first new Peabo left off—at the top.