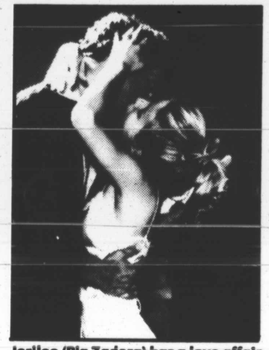
Flicks

Movie review: 'The Lonely Lady'

By Arthur J. Johnson

Remember Pia Zadora? Her name has become synonymous with excessive hype and minimal talent. A few years ago she stunned the acting world when she won a Golden Globe award as Newcomer of the Year over Howard Rollins' performance in "Ragtime" and other talents of that year.

What shocked people most was the fact that no one had seen her movie "Butterfly"(which was about father-daughter incest). It was later reported that Miss Zadora's husband, a multimillionaire, had financed the film and also a series of dinners, luncheons and even outright gifts to woo the jurors who voted for the awards.



Jerilee (Pia Zadora) has a love affair with George Ballantine (Jared Martin)

Perhaps if her performance had been of any substance, Miss Zadora would have escaped the film industry's ridicule. It wasn't.

Now Miss Zadora is back in another sexy melodrama, the film version of the Harold Robbins bestseller, "The Lonely Lady."

She portrays a California teenager who wants to be a writer. After her brutal rape by a sadistic schoolmate, she meets an aged Hollywood screenwriter who starts taking her out and, of course, he winds up marrying her and giving her her first break in the screenwriting business.

All is not bliss once she begins showing talent perhaps greater than his own. His professional jealousy, coupled with their bedroom problems, causes the marriage to break up and she becomes — you guessed it — a lonely lady.

New artist to watch— G.T. (Gary Taylor)

Gary Taylor should change his middle name to Perseverance.

When he told his co-workers at a Los Angeles supermarket four years ago that he was going to become a recording artist, "they just laughed," Taylor recalls.

When he told the musicians with whom he started to work that he was going to get a recording deal with a major label without going the traditional route of playing dinky nightclubs or working on other artists' albums, "they laughed too" he says, "They said I was crazy."

Then he signed with A&M Records, certainly a major label, and recorded his hit single, "On The Line."

When it came time to find a producer for his first album, Taylor suggested himself, and A&M executives smiled politely and gave him a list of names of established producers. A week later, Taylor went back to the record company executives with a tape of material by a producer that he thought they should listen to.

"They listen to it and loved it," he recalls, a smile creeping across his face. "They said, 'Yeah, let's use him.' Then I told them that the producer was me. I guess you could say that patience and perseverance are my strength."

That and talent.

It is being said that Taylor, an unassuming, almost shy man, may be just what a music industry choking on regurgitated funk and lyrical reruns needs. Someone fresh, new, different.

His debut album, a musical collage entitled G.T., showcases his talents as a singer, composer musician and producer with the funky "Down For The Count" and "Force of Habit," the streamlined stride of "Looking Back" and the spirited sing-along of "Just What I Had In Mind." Ballads like "Special," "Without You In My Life" and "This Time" graphically illustrate a man of unique sensitivity and lyrical skill.

"Gary is something special," says manager, Jack Nelson who also handles singer Jeffrey Osborne. "In this music industry full of b.s., Gary is a breath of fresh air. He's a sensitive, honest person and that comes through in the music that he makes."

Taylor didn't take the idea of a musical career seriously until the late 1970s when a friend invited him to compose music for a musical comedy.

"That made me know that I would write and people liked what I had to say," he says.

His rise from stock clerk to recording has been relatively short, but it certainly has not been easy, Taylor says.

"It was a struggle. It caused a lot of problems in my family life. Money is always tight with a wife and three kids and here I was spending money on musicians and studio time and equipment while my wife was looking around the house and saying, 'Hey, we need a new sofa and the car needs to be fixed.' Then there was the time away from my family. It was difficult for them and me."

All the time, he was working the 9 a.m. shift for a supermarket as a store manager.

"I was in a management training program," he recalls. "But I decided I either had to dedicate myself to management or music. I chose music and became a stock clerk."

As he developed his musical talents, Taylor went looking to peddle his wares in that sometimes unfriendly marketplace called the music industry.

"I got rejection slips from here to New York, including A&M records and Alamo Irving, which now handles my music publishing," he says with a laugh.

But eventually his talents began to be spotted. Marlena Shaw recorded his "Without You In My Life," and "On The Line" is the title track of Michael Wycoff's recent album. Quincy Jones offered him a position as a staff songwriter on his Qwest label.

And then came A&M Records.

Of all the many things Taylor does, writing, he says, is what he does best.

"That's what I like most because it allows me to be me the most," he says. "But also, it's the basis for all the music. When your looks fail you, and your singing fails you, the writing can carry you on.

"As a writer you can be important in other people's careers as well as your own. Look at Stevie Wonder. He throws away stuff that people like Diana Ross are just waiting to get their hands on. My goal is to write standards, songs that will last forever.

"I usually write songs out of my personal experiences or friends experiences. When I write love songs, I don't do it in terms of man and woman, but I think of love in terms of God's love and unconditional love that doesn't change.

Patti LaBelle to make sceen debut in 'A Soldier's Story'

Every actor of note or otherwise has a "discovery" story to tell. For some, opportunity came knocking in a bookstore, Restaurant, ice-cream parlor or in many of the incongruous spots that talent agents, producers and directors frequent on a "normal" day. Of course, some hold to the credo of being in the "right place, at the right time," and for famed songstress, the right place was at the Philadelphia opening of "A Soldier's Play" which currently on tour in cities across the country.

Out for an evening to lend support to her good friend and native Philadelphian, Charles Fuller (the Pultizer Prize winning playwright who penned both the stage and screen versions of his award-winning stage drama), Ms. Labelle simply tried to blend in with the many well-wishers who came to see the play and meet Fuller. Producer-di'ector Norman Jewison who is directing the film for Columbia Pictures was also among the well-wishers, and a chance meeting between Ms. Labelle and Jewison has culminated in her securing the sole female role of "Big Mary" in the upcomign upcoming screen version.

"A Soldier's Story" concerns itself with the murder of a black army sergeant at a segregated army base in fictional Fort Neal, La., circa 1944.

It is the subsequent investigation of this crime that forms the basis for this highly tense murder mystery, that under the direcdirection of Douglas Turner Ward, has won every major theatre award since its debut at the Negro Ensemble Company (NEC) in 1982. One of the key scenes, not originally shown in the stage production, take takes place inside a Black military club known as The Golden Slipper Saloon. As "Big Mary", Ms. Labelle will be seen as the owner of this club. You can expect to hear a few tunes from Ms. Labelle, who is extremely excited that her personal musicians will be used.

Appearing in motion pictures has been a special goal of Patti Labelle. Previous acting credits include the Broadway musical, "Your Arms Too Short To Box With God", which teamed her with Al Green, and a PBS special entitled "Working" in which she played a waitress. "A Soldier's Story" will mark her first screen role in a major motion picture. In addition to placing her in a vehicle tht that is destined to redefined the relevancy of 'Black Drama', it also places her in the company of some of America's finest Black acting talent.

Leading the way is former Oscar nominee ("Ragtime") Howard Rollins, Jr., who will portray Captain Richard Davenport, the military lawyer assigned to the investigation. And, recreating their critically acclaimed stage roles are Adolph Caesar (Tech./Sgt. Waters), Denzel Washington (Private Peterson) Larry Riley (C.J. Memphis) and David Alan Grier (Corp. Cobb). Others in the cast include David Harris, William Allen Young, Robert Townsend, Art Evans, Trey Wilson, Dennis Lipcomb, and John Hancock.

"A Soldier's Story" is currently in production in Fort Smith, Ark. shooting is scheduled to continue through November.

SOUNDS

'Wicked' Pickett moves at midnight

By Frederick I. Douglass

"Wicked" Wilson Pickett is the Man who waits until the "Midnight Hours" to dial "634-5789" while ringing up his "Sugar, Sugar" who is most widely known as "Mustang Sally" to ask her if she wants to stroll down "Funky Broadway" to the "Land of 1,000 Dances" where they could do "Soul Dance No. 3" until the club owner says "It's Too Late" to do any more fancy stepping here tonight, so "Don't Fight It," get back on "Engine No. 9 and head for your next gig. He was in Baltimore last Friday to perform at a cabaret style show at the Gentlemen Ten on Edmondson Avenue.

During Friday afternoon, Mr. Pickett sat around in his hotel room at the Hyatt Regency spinning tales about his career while being interviewed by local media people who remember that he was one of the lead singers for the Falcons and that he wrote "I Found a Love," one of the group's biggest hits. "I began my career as a gospel singer around 1955 after my family moved to Detroit from Prattville, Alabama.

In 1959, Willie Schoefield, the bass singer for the Falcons asked me to join the group. I didn't want to at first because I thought they were doing a different kind of music. We called it Rhythm n' Blues back then. But I soon found out that it wasn't that different from many of the spirituals I had been singing.

During the '60's, I had another big stroke of luck when Lloyd Price, Mr. Personality himself, signed me up for the Double LL label and I recorded 'If You Need Me,' a record that did a lot to get my career as a solo performer on the road."

Next, Wilson Pickett went with the Atlantic label and recorded "In the Midnight Hour" which ranks along with this tune "Ninety - Nine and One - Half" among the all time classics of Rhythm n' Blues. Travelling the "chittlin' circuit," Mr. Pickett played countless clubs throughout the United States and has travelled abroad to France, Germany, England and many other foreign lands where music is widely known.

Les Parsons interviews Wilson Pickett

Currently, Mr. Pickett is taking advantage of one of the periodic resurgences of interest in "Oldies But Goodies" music — an interest that inspired promoter Stacey Sanders to invest in bringing in Mary Wells to the Gentlemen Ten a few weeks ago and sparked him to develop plans for bringing in Sam and Save, the singers whose tune "Hold On, I'm Coming" has been imitated but never equalled.

Unfortunately, an entertainer gets to be an "Oldies But Goodies" act by ceasing to make popular records. Although Wilson Pickett recorded the album "A Funky Situation" in 1978, he really has not had a big hit for a decade or more, going back to the days when he came out with "Don't Let the Green Grass Fool you," "Don't Knock My Love" and the Grammy Award winning tune "Engine No. 9."

Reminiscing about the days when his name was up in brighter lights, Wilson Pickett says "when I think about our time . . . That is, when Bobby Blue Bland, Johnny Taylor and myself were hot . . . I remember the good times and the bad times. But I like to think about the good things that have happened to me. I can remember piling in the car with people like Wild Man Steve or the Shirelles and other entertainers and driving to Baltimore all the way from New York City just to eat crabs. We used to have them piled way up high on the table and we'd roll up our sleeves and go for ourselves. Yeah, that was the thing to do back in those days. I mean we really had a ball every time we came to Baltimore."

While everyone had a ball partying to Wilson Pickett's music Friday night at the Gentlemen Ten, his visit to Baltimore ended on a sour note because the promoters of his show say that be seems to have lived up to the title of his tune "Midnight Mover," leaving some discrepancies about the final disposition of his hotel bill. Mr. Pickett could not be reached for comment at press time.

CCB Calendar

Tuesday, Oct. 18 — "Tuesday Mornings" older series; Joseph Senior Center; Featured program: "Adventures in the Land of the Sound of Music," a slide show with live music by Z. John Levay, M.D., Professor of Psychology, Catonsville Community College.

Wednesday, Oct. 19 — "Wednesday Afternoons"older adults series; Keswick Home; Featured talk; "Pure Gold: Aerobic Dancing for the 50 Plus Generation," by Robin Taylor, Regional Director, Aerobics International.

Friday, Oct. 21 Disco Dance; Liberty Campus Cafeteria; 9 p.m. - 1 a.m.; FREE to CCB students with I.D.; $1 general admission; For details call 396-0248.

Wednesday, Oct. 26 — "Wednesday Afternoons" older adults series; Keswick Home; Featured program: "Decorative Arts," by Arthur L. Flinner, chairman, Speaker Committee, Maryland Historical Society.

Friday, Oct. 28 — Film, "Friday the 13th, Part III;" Harbor Campus CCB student with I.D.; $1 general admission; For details call 396-0248.

Saturday, Oct. 29 — Cross Country vs. Morgan; Hanlon Park; 10 a.m.; FREE; For details call 396-0994.

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