Spotlight On.....

Pennsylvania Avenue's Sphinx Club: Alive And Kicking At 38 Years Old

By Frederick I. Douglass

The Sphinx Club, the Pennsylvania nitery that made its debut to Baltimore's entertainment scene during 1946, still maintains its magnetic attraction for hundreds of fun seeking persons who flock to the establishment on a regular basis to enjoy its cozy ambience.

Just this past Sunday night, the patrons of the Sphinx Club were regaled by live entertainment, both planned and spontaneous, that featured the Morris Dow Trio (Morris Dow, guitar; Reggie Davis, keyboards; and Jerome Epps, drums); "Tiny" Tim Harris, who was supposed to be off that night, grabbing the microphone to sing "You Are So Beautiful" and "As Time Goes By;" vocalist Earl O'Maro getting inspired to croon a couple of tunes; plus John "Dancin' Red" Ford becoming caught up in the combustive mood and giving a demonstration of his terpsichorean talents. There was even a revival of the Madison, with Randy Tilghman calling steps that had denizens of the club spelling out the "Big M," erasing it, and exhibiting other fancy footwork.

The Morris Dow Trio was cooking this past Sunday night, with Morris spanking the guitar authoritatively and occasionally changing up instruments to play a brand new harmonica that a friend had just brought back from Germany for him. Responding to the mellow musical groove, someone was always on the dance floor while others assumed a laid back posture, sipping on assorted beverages and conversing animatedly with old and new found friends.

"It's always like this" says Randy Tilghman, a personable young man who was virtually raised in the Sphinx Club by his father, Charlie Tilghman, the founder of the nitespot that has become an institution in Baltimore. "We never know who might drop in and perform, or just what might happen here on any given night, but it's always fun. We try to keep things as lively and comfortable as possible for our members every night of the week. We are one of the oldest singly owned membership club in the United States. We still find that people like being part of a key club because they appreciate the fact that we have a doorman who screens the crowd and knows just about everyone who comes in here. While some people are a little apprehensive about coming down on the Avenue, your doctors, lawyers, judges and businesspersons find this place to be a hassle free environment and come here regularly to have good times."

Presently, Pennsylvania Avenue is enjoying renaissance under the dynamic leadership of individuals like Lena Boone who personally is responsible for much of the urban renewal that has taken place including the presence of Our Supermarket, new apartment buildings and owner occupied housing, new businesses that are flourishing and a neighborhood that has made dramatic improvements in terms of its overall appearance. The major problem now is that some folks are afraid to go there to check out the Shake and Bake Family Fun Center and other amenities that have been added since the Avenue has been rebuilt. Personally, I feel more comfortable going to the Avenue than I would be in visiting Hampden, Dundalk and several other locales. And when I do visit Pennsylvania Avenue, my first stop is always at the Sphinx Club where I'm guaranteed of seeing one or more people that I know and want to talk to.

Stepping inside the Sphinx Club, one is immediately impressed with the facility's im-

Continued on page 6

Elsie Mallory, Randy Tilghman and Sandy Rogers make things comfortable for the customers.

Naomi Wallace and Judson Hughes dance to the music at the Sphinx Club.

FRIDAY PLUS'

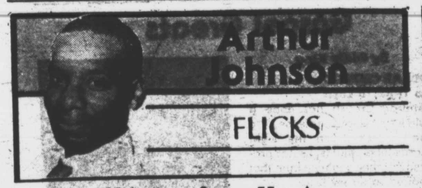
NIGHT LIFE GUIDE

SUGAR HILL
BAR/LOUNGE
OPEN 7 DAYS
Disc Jockey Featured on Weekend
Home of the
Famous "SUGAR HILL BURGER."
Also Serve Package Goods
2361 DRUID HILL AVE.
(On Corner of Whitelock and Druid Hill Ave.)

Pete's Place Bar & Lounge
322 N. Franklintown Rd. (at Franklin)
DISCO Dancing Fri. & Sat.
Oldies but Goodies Sunday 5 P.M. - Until

Roots
Vine St. at Smallwood
Open Mon.-Sat. 8 AM-2AM
Sun 6 AM-2AM
SUNDAY BREAKFAST SHOW
8 AM Upstairs Lounge
Open Thur-Frj & Sat 9-2
Kitchen open 7 Days
10 AM-2 AM
945-7298

PHOENIX ENTERTAINMENT presents
★ A JAZZ EXTRAVAGANZA ★
★★★★★★ STARRING ★★★★
ROY AYERS
"EVERYBODY LOVES THE SUNSHINE"
WITH...
LONNIE LISTON SMITH
"VISIONS OF A NEW WORLD"
TOM BROWNE
"FUNKIN' IN JAMAICA"
ALSO...
JEAN CARN
"DON'T LET IT GO TO YOUR HEAD"
Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND
Sunday, Oct. 7
1 BIG SHOW 8:00 P.M.
TICKETS ON SALE AT ALL USUAL LOCATIONS
FOR TICKET INFORMATION CALL: 837-5691 or 523-6777



"Amadeus": A tremendous bore

Like a gorgeous woman with no personality, "Amadeus" looks (and sounds) great but is, at its heart, a tremendous bore. This expensive and lengthy film adaption of Peter Shaffer's successful Broadway drama chronicles the life and death of 17th century musical genius Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Tom Hulce) as seen through the spiteful and murderously jealous eyes of lesser known composer Antonio Salieri F. Murray Abraham).

According to Shaffer (who also wrote the screenplay), Salieri, a court composer for Emperor Joseph II, considered it a personal affront that God chose to bless the brash, hedonistic Mozart with an incredible musical gift instead of himself, a more cultured and studied musician. He cannot forgive what he perceives as God's lack of vision, and when Mozart finally arrives at the emperor's court, both humiliating and overshadowing Salieri with the abundance and mere proximity of his talent, Salieri denounces God and begins a long campaign to ultimately destroy the wild boy genius.

With such a loveless character at one end of the film's spectrum, our sympathies might naturally lie with Mozart. But the musical prodigy is hardly lovable or likable. If he were alive today, we would say he lived life in the fast lane with no regrets, much like a 17th century Mick Jagger. Mozart parties nightly, drinks to excess, spends money he does not have, and insults everyone, (including the emperor), but he composes operas so remarkable that all is forgiven. However, through his out-of-control behavior he plays right into the hands of the vindictive Salieri who plots Mozart's downfall 26 hours a day. Watching and waiting, Salieri finally engineers Mozart's mental and physical destruction.

Confined to the limitations of the stage where dialogue is primary and action secondary, "Amadeus" was probably a battle of the minds, a psychological play with the actor in the Salieri role in almost total control of the evening. As opened up for the screen as a lavish costume drama with many authentic locations in real 17th century castles and the legendary Mozart compositions drenching the audience, the two protagonists (or antagonists since Mozart seems self-destructive) seem almost tiny in comparison to the film's elegant trappings.

Abraham is fine as the twisted, sado-masochistic Salieri who loves Mozart's work but hates Mozart and God. The problem is that the role is a one-note samba. Once it is established that he hates Mozart and himself (for not being Mozart), Abraham is obliged to spend the rest of the film smirking and sneering as he awaits the chance to destroy Mozart.

Mozart, played by Elton John look-alike Hulce, is a tiresome character prone to fits of insane giggling. Besides the externals of Mozart's eccentricities—pink and yellow powdered wigs often spiked like today's punk rockers, a lusty nature and a troubled but unresolved and unexplored relationship with his stern father (played with great style and intensity by Roy Dotrice)—we never get inside Mozarts head. At least we know why Salieri is so crazed, but why is Mozart a borderline simpleton when he is not composing? We could perhaps care about him if he were not such a cartoon character.

Because neither Salieri or Mozart as characters elicits our concern, we're left staring at the luxurious costumes, castles and sets as the wonderful music pours from the screen. To add to the puzzlement of this mammoth film are the distracting and unmistakable American accents of Hulce and Elizabeth Berridge who portrays Mozart's wife as well as several other of the American actors. Perhaps I have seen too many British made Masterpiece Theater productions of this kind, but it is almost laughable to hear these supposed 17th century Europeans speak as if they just graduated from Hollywood High School. When you add in the seemingly interminable two and a half hour running time, "Amadeus" makes for an unsatisfying outing at the movies for all but devoted Mozart enthusiasts. "Amadeus" is a gorgeous plastic doll of a film, but lacks real flesh and blood.

Tom Hulce as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart in a scene from "Amadeus" now at area theatres.

Talking TV

By Mike Easterling

It's that time again. Like new shoes in September and Reggie Jackson in October. The new television shows are ready to debut and it's time to count the black faces in the new lineups. Come on, don't sit there and try to deny that you do it. You do!! We all do. I know I do. The annual exercise in futility. Well, let's see what the body count is this year.

First, on Tuesday night, there's E-R. That's hospital talk for Emergency Room. E-R is an Eliot Gould vehicle which also features Lynn Moody (a Valerie Simpson look-a-like) as an industrious nurse. Newcomer Bruce A. Young portrays Fred, a police officer. We'll see where that goes.

On Thursday night, a new black family moves into Primetime neighborhood with THE COSBY SHOW on NBC. Bill Cosby plays Dr. Cliff Huxtable. His wife played by Phyllicia Ayers-Allen, is a lawyer and they have four kids from the ages of 5-16. That is a whole lot of "folks" on TV at one time.

On Friday, Philip Michael Thomas shows up on MIAMI VICE as a slick New York cop with a somewhat "colored" (forgive me) background. And that is it for new faces on new shows. How many is that? Seven, eight... Whatever. Add to that: A lot of the big network hits have attempted to woo more black viewers by adding blacks to already established casts of the big primetime winners.

Alphonso Ribiero, Broadways "Tap Dance Kid" joins SILVER SPOONS and Telma Hopkins (remember Tony Orlando and Dawn?) is now a regular on GIMME A BREAK. And then there is the grandiose ratings builder Diahann Carroll and Billy Dee Williams on DYNASTY. Even I am going to watch the show now.

Of course, the JEFFERSONS continue strong in the CBS Sunday Night lineup. George will continue to yell at Weezie, Weezie will continue to yell at Florence and Florence will continue to do Accent commercials.

Gary Coleman, now the lone black son of Conrad Bain on DIFFERENT STROKES, as aging Todd Bridges has left the show. I guess Arnold will spend a lot of time on the phone with WEBSTER.

Hope he can get an answer as WEB has moved with George and Ma'am to a Victorian townhouse this year.

BENSON continues to manage the Governor's money. (What state is he governor of anyway?)

Bubba Smith is still doin' it on BLUE THUNDER; Roger E. Mosely is still flying with MAGNUM P.I.; Lincoln Kilpatrick is still running with MATT HOUSTON, and Nathan Cooke is still watching out for the "Baddies" that show up at ABC's HOTEL. Shari Belafonte-Harper is now appearing in VELVET and Mr. T. is still the Prince of PrimeTime. (No, not That Prince!)

Now, let's see. How many is that? Twenty? Twenty-one? More? Less? Anyway, point is we're making progress.