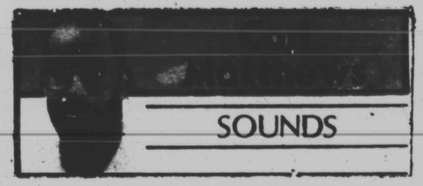

GLADYS KNIGHT AND THE PIPS "Life" (Columbia)

As you probably already know, Gladys Knight And The Pips is one of those groups with a loooooong history.

They've been together for more than 30 years. They've been hitting the record charts for more than 20 years. Is that long enough for you?

Yep, quite a few years have passed since Gladys Knight formed a singing group with her brother Merald (nicknamed "Bubba") and cousins Edward Patten and William Guest. The nickname of another cousin, James "Pip" Wood, became the group's name.

In 1961 Gladys Knight And The Pips recorded "Every Beat Of My Heart," their first hit single. For trivia buffs, it was recorded on Vee Jay.

With Motown they had hits such as "Heard It Through The Grapevine," "Neither One Of Us (Wants To Be The First To Say Goodbye)," "If I Were Your Woman," and "Daddy Could Swear, I Declare."

In 1973 the group joined with Buddah Records. How could we forget their first Buddah LP "Imagination," featuring the hit single "Midnight Train To Georgia."

About that song: it was originally written about a plane, but Gladys decided she'd rather take the train, and she took it all the way to number one on the charts.

In 1981 Gladys Knight And The Pips moved to Columbia and released the album "About Love," produced by Ashford And Simpson. Later came their Grammy award winning single "Save The Overtime (For Me)."

Now Gladys and company bring us "Life," featuring the single "My Time," another top-40 R&B hit.

And "My Time" sounds like a great single. Sure am glad they came up with a clever intro for this one. It's an uptempo dance number, written and produced by the group, and Spencer Bean's guitar solo keeps it hot.

The vocals on the title track have a gospel feel, blended smoothly with the modern uptempo setting created by programmed drums and Fender bass. A number of groups have accomplished this sort of thing on their albums; one example that comes to mind is Womack And Womack, with last year's "Love Wars."

But then there are those Gladys Knight And The Pips fans who just want to hear Gladys belt one out. Let 'em cool out with "Till I See You Again."

If you've ever heard the Billy Idol hit "Eyes Without A Face" you'll have an idea of the atmosphere created in the Leon Sylvers-produced "Forever." Gladys Knight and company give Midnight Star a run for the money in "Do You Wanna Have Some Fun," and then it's time for more relaxation with "Straight Up" and "Glitter."

As one can plainly hear, Gladys and company have come a loooooong way since the Motown days. This album takes over where their last album "Visions" left off — if you enjoyed "Visions" get this one, too — it's hot stuff.

Other cuts: "Strivin'," "Keep Givin' Me Love," "Just Let Me Love You."

Gladys Knight and the Pips

From the Carl Matthews Book Of Lists

This week another interesting look at song titles. Here are ten song titles in which the last word in the title is the same as the first word.

Time After Time — Cyndi Lauper (1984)

One On One — Daryl Hall And John Oates (1983)

Tighter, Tighter — 'Alive And Kicking (1970)

On And On — Gladys Knight And The Pips (1974)

Fun, Fun, Fun — The Beach Boys (1964)

Wonderful! Wonderful! — Johnny Mathis (1957)

Run Joey Run — David Geddes (1975)

Time Is Time — Andy Gibb (1980)

Black Is Black — Los Bravos (1966)

Do What You Do — Jermaine Jackson (1984).

We Welcome Feedback From Readers

Friends, you know as well as I do that record reviewers, are human beings who love to get mail, and that they are not perfect. Therefore, if you should find an informational boo-boo in this here column, or if you have any comments, feel free to write and let me know what you're thinking.

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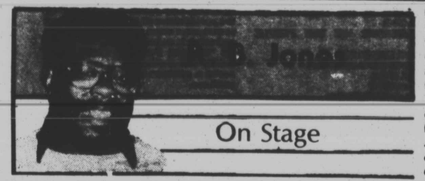

"Hedda Gabler": A Classic in Western Theatre

Hedda Gabler by Henrik Ibsen is a play about discontent in a woman who is constrained by the social customs of the 19th century which limited woman to pampered, pedastal existence if she were fortunate enough to be born into the upper classes of society.

The Europe of the time depicted in the play is the Victorian Era when propriety of conduct, class distinctions and civil behavior toward one's peers meant everything. Hedda Gabler is a woman who is the daughter of a renowned general who seemingly left her without the inheritance that one of her social standing could expect to receive.

In desperation, she marries the available suitor Jorgen Tesman, who seems to offer her the financial security and social class that she desires. Her husband is a dry intellectual mole who digs out obscure historical facts to publish in books. He does not inspire passion in his new bride but rather contempt that worsens as the play progresses. Still, Hedda is almost past marriageable age and so she must settle for Jorgen.

They move into the right house in the right neighborhood. To the horror of Hedda, she finds out that the professorship that her husband was almost certain to get is up for competition. She is forced to live a penny pinching existence with a man who is more concerned with obscure historical tidbits of information and the well-being of his two elderly aunts than with the discontent that is seething in his wife.

Hedda's only diversions are firing the pistols that she inherited from her father and driving verbal knives into those who cross her path. She delights in articulating her contempt for others and her rage at the suffocating sterility of her existence. Hedda Gabler is a loose cannon on a ship's deck, wreaking havoc and when even that small measure of satisfaction and freedom of action is about to be taken from her, Hedda decides that life is no longer worth living.

Tana Hicken makes Hedda Gabler live and snort fire on the stage. She seems to relish twisting the knife in the psychic wounds of the other characters and she conveys the claustrophobic frustration that Hedda feels. Everyone comes and goes from the Tesman house except Hedda. It is almost as if she is under house arrest. Even the act of dressing symbolizes confinement. Ms. Hicken changes costume on stage in a small circle of light and the costumes seem to constrict her breathing and movement. Her Hedda strains at the limits of her role as a woman but she never throws it off, so the tension mounts as the play progresses. Ms. Hicken's performance is superlative.

Martin La Platney does a creditable job with the role of Hedda's indifferent husband Jorgen. His character was enough of an academic and enough of a social climber and doer of proper deeds but, he did not quite portray the overwhelming ego that lurks behind the facade of Jorgen's passivity. When Hedda tells Jorgen that she deceived her ex-lover Lovborg who is also Jorgen's brilliant rival for a professorship, she claims to do it out of love for him. La Platney did not convey adequately the confirmation of Jorgen's self absorption in his mind at that moment.

Georgia Southcotte who played Aunt Juliane Tesman gave an excellent account of herself. She embodied the doting aunt with a realism that I could authenticate from munerous real life experiences. She was the epitome of the self sacrificing surrogate parent.

Joanne Camp's portrayal of Mrs. Elvstead was supposed to be somewhat a kindred soul to Hedda. She too felt the constraints imposed on women in the 19th century, yet unlike Hedda who turns her frustration into blows against those around her, Mrs. Elvstead rebels against those restrictions. She leaves her loveless marriage and refuses to go back. She enters the male preserve of academia and writes a book with her lover Lovborg. Her Mrs. Elvstead did courageous things, but she did not seem to be the bold courageous person she was. There was a blandness to the characterization.

This same problem affected Joseph Hindy who played Eilert Lovborg. His characterization did not convey Lovborg's brilliance or his passion for life and women that attracted both Hedda and Mrs. Elvstead to him. He was supposed to be a barely reformed hellraiser, but Hindy seemed almost as limp as Tesman. That detracted from the love triangle relationship of Hedda, Tesman and Lovborg.

Adrian Sparks who played Judge Brack, the outwardly proper jurist who delights in preying on his friends' bored and neglected wives, gave an adequate performance albeit too reserved to really indicate that the judge had the enthusiasm let alone the just necessary to bed regularly a number of married women.

Rosemary Knower as Berthe the maid gave a competent performance.

Hedda Gabler is a classic in western theater and is well worth seeing at Center Stage.

Soap Opera Week

By Kimberly Redmond

Q: While watching "As the World Turns" the other day, I fell in love with the song Heather Dalton sang. Can you tell me the name of it? I'm also curious whether Tonya Pinkins, the actress who plays Heather, was lip-syncing or actually singing the song. — B.J., Malden, N.C.

A: The tune is titled "Warm by My Side," and Frank Runyeon, the actor who plays Steve Andropolous on the soap, wrote it. The actor penned the ditty a little more than a year ago for his real-life wife Annie's birthday. The tune was adopted as Steve and Betsy Andropolous's song on the soap. And yes, Miss Pinkins did actually sing the tune.

Q: Can you tell me who Audrey Landers portrayed on the defunct soap "Somerset"? What is she doing since she left "Dallas"? — P.M., Clark, N.J.

A: Miss Landers portrayed Heather Lawrence on the NBC soap. Currently, Miss Landers is filming the long-awaited movie, "A Chorus Line," based on the Broadway smash.

(Have a question about soap operas? Write Kimberly Redmond at 200 Park Ave., Room 602, New York, NY 10166. Questions cannot be answered personally but those of general interest will be answered in future columns.)