ALEXANDER O'NEAL
"Alexander O'Neal" (A&M)

Alexander O'Neal

Alexander O'Neal, 31, a Mississippi native, has his first album on Tabu.

Side one contains four pleasant, non-irritating songs, including "A Broken Heart Can Mend" and "Look At Us Now." His singing style on these can hardly be called unique; he falls into the Jeffrey Osborne or George Benson category of pop/R&B style.

The pace picks up on side two with a 10-minute medley including "Innocent," which sounds a lot like a jam recorded by The Time; O'Neal and the producers of this album (Jimmy Jam, Terry Lewis and Monte Moir) were all Time members at one time. Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis were also the producers on Cherrelle's first album, "Fragile," in case you're interested.

The single "Innocent" is also a current top-20 R&B chart hit.

I find the album a good effort, but not outstanding.

Other cuts: "If You Were Here Tonight," "Do You Wanna Like I Do," "What's Missing," "You Were Meant To Be My Lady (Not My Girl)."

PROCESS AND THE DOO-RAGS
"Too Sharp" (Columbia)

Here's a five-man vocal group from New York who has its first album for Columbia, a group with the unusual name of Process And The Doo-Rags.

The name is derived from the popular 1950's "process" hair styles and the silk scarves that were worn around them. The group members also sport some interesting nicknames: "Process," "Wave," "Gumps," "Smoothie," and "Shorty."

On this album, the group is going for an integrated sound, combining 80's style music with that of past eras.

The album was produced, arranged, written and conceived by Rick James, the man you know for such "punk funk" golden oldies as "Super Freak," "Mary Jane," "You And I" and "Busting Out."

"Stomp And Shout," the album's opener and first single, is not one of James' best compositions, and sounds pretty much like his older funk hits. Of course, he also plays drums, guitar, bass and synthesizer on the album.

The entire side one sounds like a concert featuring Rick James and The Temptations doing their hit number from the past, "Standing On The Top."

On side two, "Dance The Way You Want (Party Freaks)," with its synthesized back-up vocals, sounds more like it is borrowing from Midnight Star than from any '60s or '50s group.

For a change of pace, the album's last three cuts are non-Rick James compositions. We find Marvin Gaye's "The Bells," done in a nice mellow style, and competent acapella renditions of "Daddy's Home" (Shep & The Limelites) and "Thin Line Between Love And Hate" (an oldie by The Persuaders).

For the most part, I can only recommend this album to Rick James fans. Other cuts: "Serious Freak," "Too Sharp," "Come Into My Life," "Searching For Love," "Ooh Wee."

Process and the Doo-Rags

VAPIOUS ARTISTS
"We Are The World"
(Columbia)

On Monday, January 28, 1985, a historic recording took place in Los Angeles. All 7:02 of it is here, featuring such famous voices as Richie, Dylan, Springsteen, Wonder, Ross, Joel, Lauper and so many more.

The United Support of Artists for Africa is a non-profit corporation formed to help the millions of suffering people in Africa and the United States. The single "We Are The World" has already climbed to number one on the charts.

The album features nine other tracks donated by various artists for the album. "If Only For The Moment, Girl" by Steve Perry, lead singer with Journey, is a relatively low-key piece of Journey-style pop. "Just A Little Closer" by The Pointer Sisters is done in their rocking '80s style, but lacks the punch of their bigger hits, such as "Automatic."

Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's live "Trapped" reveals how the Boss tackles a Jimmy Cliff number in a live setting.

The Canadian single by Northern Lights, "Tears Are Not Enough," is included here. Sounding like "We Are The World" in spirit, "Tears Are Not Enough," featuring such talents as Gordon Lightfoot, Oscar Peterson and Anne Murray, will also help in the fight against world hunger.

"4 The Tears In Your Eyes," by Prince, continues in the "Purple Rain" style of message expression, and Chicago's "Good For Nothing" is a tad funkier Chicago than most of us are used to.

Tina Turner's "Total Control," a near-7-minute track cut down to 3:38 for this LP, pales in comparison to her "Private Dancer" work. Kenny Rogers' "A Little More Love" is a competently done piece of country rock. Huey Lewis And The News "Truth" is "Paradise," recorded live in San Francisco with The Tower Of Power Horn Section. Should make Lewis fans happy.

Although having the other tracks by superstar artists is a bonus, the album is worth owning for "We Are The World" and of course, to help those less fortunate.

Trekked over to D.C. to catch the Jazztet—Benny Golson Art Farmer group—which opened at Charlie's of Georgetown this week.

Must say that it is quite an impressive club, although it is situated in a most unlikely spot off Wisconsin Ave. at K St., NW.

If you're not that familiar with the area, just get to the heart of Georgetown, which is at Wisconsin and M Sts., then continue to the end of Wisconsin Ave., — that's K St.

Keep looking for a place to park, for the lots in the area charge $4 for evenings—and that's on weekdays.

* * *

Once inside the club, you'll find a laidback plushness indicative of the attention to detail that marks a quality place. There are a couple of dining rooms in the establishment, but you'll have no trouble finding the cabaret setting.

Would recommend reservations in order to insure choice seating, although there didn't seem to be any really bad seats in the club. Oh, yes, there are real cloth tablecloths, with cloth napkins—a sure sign of class.

Although food is available, most cabaret patrons do more imbibing than eating. In our case, we ordered a carafe of house white wine, which while not spectacular—was drinkable, and satisfies the two-drink minimum policy of the club.

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On to the music—although if you're familiar with the work of the Jazztet, little need be said. The current group consists of Art Farmer, flugelhorn, and Benny Golson, tenor sax;

Curtis Fuller, trombone; Ray Drummond, bass; Mickey Tucker, piano, and Marvin (Smitty) Smith, drums.

Some musical groups have a readily identifiable sound—the Blakey Messengers sound, the Horace Silver sound, the Ahmad Jamal sound, etc., and the Jazztet sound remains today as it did during the heyday of the original group.

Most of the material played are originals, and most of them were composed by Benny Golson. But they do some standard classics, such as a gorgeous rendition of "I Remember Clifford," by Farmer (written by Golson, incidently).

Mickey Tucker got a chance to show off his pianistic prowess with an ethereal "Autumn Leaves," which also provided Fuller a chance to really "get down."

Had to comment to Curtis that he sounded in top from this evening—and he did—he was pleased, adding, "I'm glad, because I am really tired tonight."

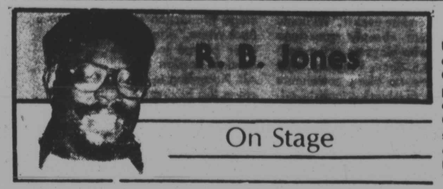
Imagine a lot of people wanted to hear some of the old favorites such as "Killer Joe" and "Blues March," and supposed they will be included in some of the performances.

But when you can hear Curtis Fuller interpolate snatches of "Lazy Bones" into "Autumn Leaves," you know the group is tight and totally together.

Noticed a minor complaint over the lighting at the bandstand of the club, since light to read music by was an essential.

Know you have heard about the $25 cover charge that existed during an appearance of Sarah Vaughan, or the $20 cover charge Oscar Peterson commanded;

This time, however, the couvert (dig that French spelling) is $12.50 for the weekend, and they'll be in place through Sunday night.



Discovering new plays

Center Stage's Playwrights 85 Series of New works produced between mainstage productions was a mixed bag. It was a worthy attempt to showcase new or seldom done works. The first play, "The Execution of Justice" was a play based on the murders of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone and City Supervisor Harvey Milk by former policeman and former City Supervisor Dan White.

"The Execution of Justice" is a powerful, large cast play that carries tremendous impact without being overly rhetorical. It mixed fact and imagination into a combination that makes for a fascinating evening of theater.

The second production of the Playwrights Series was "Native Speech" a play that made great use of the English language, did not equal the first production in content or social relevance.

The last production "Who They Are And How It Is With Them" was overly long, but its two main characters Biz a prison parolee, and Finney, a parolee from a mental hospital are well drawn and interact with the effortless ease of Laurel and Hardy in their prime.

The exchanges of the two men are funny, acerbic, sentimental and cruel. They exhibit a bond of love underneath the looniess of their habitual loser wisecracks. They are two men released from one captivity only to go out into the world where the inadequacies of their own characters imprison them in ways that institutionalization never could.

The actors were all excellent. James Handy, William Foeller, Anderson Matthews and Brenda Wehle give polished highly engaging performance. In fact all of the actors who have performed at Center Stage this year in the Playwrights Series have held their own.

Center Stage brought some imaginative plays to Baltimore through this series and the prospects for even greater improvement in the quality and diversity of style in the play selection are expansive.

Other theater groups in the city are attempting to develop new plays by participated in the Baltimore Playwrights festival which will produce new plays at various theaters around the city. Also the Arena Players have for the second year in a row sponsored a reader's theater which produced staged readings of plays submitted. Interested parties can send scripts to the Arena Playhouse, marked Readers Theater. I'm not sure what the requirements are, but I would suggest sending typed scripts only. The address is 801 McCulloh St. Baltimore Md. 21201.

Kool and The Gang featured on Friday Night Videos

"Forever Man" by Eric Clapton, "Fresh" by Kool and The Gang, "One More Night" by Phil Collins, "Oo-Ee-Didley Bop!" by Peter Wolf and a new video by Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers will highlight NBC-TV's "Friday Night Videos" following the April 5 edition of "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson."

"Forever Man" is Clapton's debut single from "Behind the Sun," his first album in over two years, which was spotlighted in "Billboard." That cut was cited as "a fast breaking first single ... already rivaling Clapton's biggest single hits in terms of station response."

Kool and The Gang, one of the most successful Pop-R&B groups of this decade, will be represented by "Fresh."

"One More Night" is Phil Collins' chart-climbing new hit, presently No. 1 with a bullet on the Hot 100 chart (from the Billboard charts for the week ending 3-30-85). This year, Collins won his first Grammy as a solo artist, for Best Pop Vocal Performance by a Male, for "Against All Odds," the song also nominated for an Oscar.

"Oo-Ee-Didley Bop!" is Peter Wolf's third video from his debut solo album, "Lights Out," which has already been certified gold. Wolf made his name with the J. Geils Band.

Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers' first hit was "Breakdown" in 1978, which established them as one of New Wave's premiere pop bands. Subsequent hits include "Refugee," "Don't Do Me Like That," "The Waiting" and "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," a duet with Stevie Nicks.

The year Joan dearest went on for her daughter

By Kimberly Redmond

Q: In the film "Mommie Dearest," Diana Scarwid, the actress who portrayed Christina Crawford, was supposedly an actress on a soap opera. I'd like to know if Miss Crawford was really on a soap, or if that was just part of the movie script. — V.W., Levittown, Pa.

A: In real-life, Miss Crawford appeared as Joan Borman, a gold-digger type of character on the now defunct soap, "The Secret Storm." When Christina took ill in 1968, her dearest mommie Joan Crawford, replaced her for two days, even though the legendary star was 30 years older than the soap's character.

Q: I have a $20 bet with my friend, who says that the actress who portrays Terry Brock on "General Hospital" never appeared on the nighttime TV show "Happy Days." I think she played Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham's niece, K.C. Who's right? — J.M., Colonia, NJ.

A: Sorry, J.M., but your friend wins. "GH" star Robyn Bernard has never appeared on "Happy Days." Miss Bernard's only other professional television role was a one-shot on the nighttime series, "The Facts of Life," on which she played the teen actress, Hedda Hart.

Q: Is Todd Curtis, the actor who portrays Jordy Clegg on the CBS soap "Capitol," related to film actor Tony Curtis? They look so much alike. — N.B., Newton, N.C.

A: The resemblance is striking, but, Todd and Tony Curtis are not related. The actors only share the same last name.

Q: I'm a great fan of John de Lancie, who portrays Eugene Bradford on "Days of Our Lives." Could you give me some information about him? — L.A., Iselin, N.J.

A: The actor, who appeared as Henry V in a 9-th-grade school play, arrived in Hollywood in 1977. He's been a working actor ever since. De Lancie appeared in numerous nighttime series, as well as the miniseries "The Thorn Birds" and "Scruples". He has also appeared in numerous theatrical productions, including the works of Shakespeare. He was also in the films "Loving Couples" and "The Onion Field." He is married to actress Marnie Mosiman and the couple is expecting their first child.

Q: I love soap operas, and as a budding actor, I wonder if you could tell me how I can go about getting a role on one of the shows? — L.B., Houma, La.

A: First bit of advice: It's a jungle out there. Remember that thousands of acting hopefuls are looking for employment, and the most logical step is on the lucrative soap operas. The best advice I can offer is to continue acting in community theater and school and college productions. Then you can seek an agent or, like most young actors, pound the pavements looking for work. Most soap casting directors receive hundreds of photos and resumes weekly, but if you feel strongly about your objectives, then go for it. I wish you the best of luck. And if you make it, you owe me 10 percent!

Q: Why was Arlen Dean Snyder, the actor who portrays Harry O'Neill, replaced by Frank Converse on "One Life to Live"? I feel Converse is all wrong for the part; why, I snicker because he looks like his daughter's big brother! — C.E., Colorado Springs, Colo.

A: ABC has never released an official reason why Converse replaced Arlen Dean Snyder. But when rumor had it that Harry would become romantically involved with either Viki Buchanan or Dorian Callison, the idea was that the soap needed a "younger" looking actor to portray Harry.

Q.: I'm a big fan of "General Hospital" star Jimmy McNichol. Will you print an address where I can write to him?—S. P., Eastlake, Ohio.

A.: McNichol, who portrays Josh Clayton on the ABC soap, can be reached c/o "General Hospital," ABC 4151 Prospect Ave., Hollywood, CA. 90067. And in case you were wondering, yes, the actor is Kristy McNichol's brother.

(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.)

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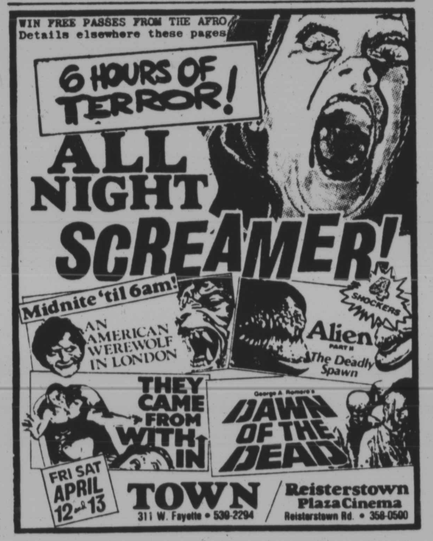
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