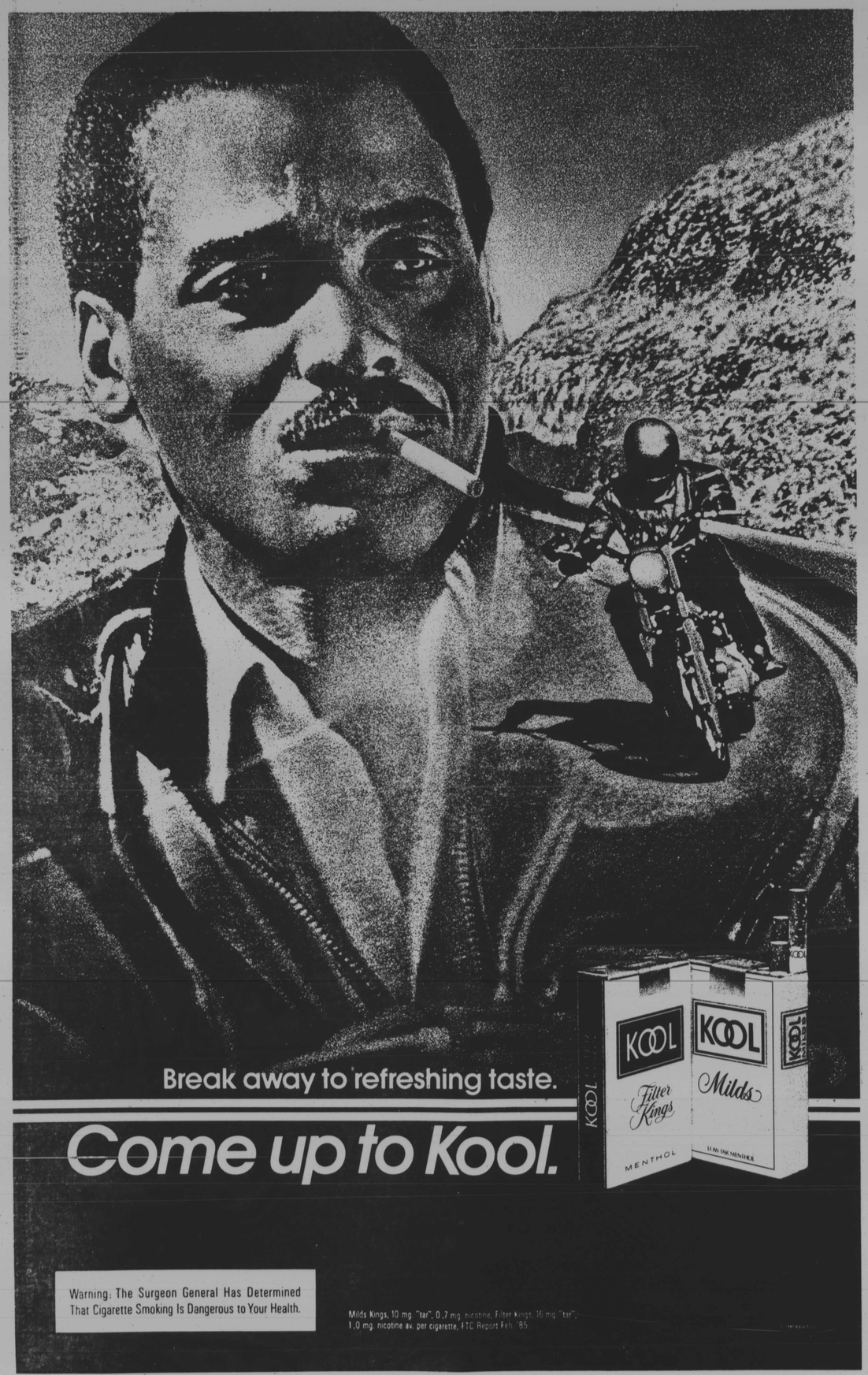

Rooney as Countess Francine

# SUGAR BABIES ...a funny, funny show!

Mickey Rooney and his co-star Jane Summerhays treated first nighters to an evening of genuine laughter Tuesday when the smash hit burlesque musical, "Sugar Babies" opened at the Lyric Opera House. At the end the three million dollar extravaganza earned a famous Baltimore standing ovation.

"Sugar Babies" is for white audiences what they saw at theatres like the Gayety on Baltimore Street and black audiences saw in "Bubbling Brown Sugar" in "Eubie" or in well - crafted shows at the Apollo and Royal Theatres with great comics like Miller and Lyles, Moms Mabley and Butter Beans and Susie.

"Sugar Babies" was inspired by a scholarly paper on burlesque that Professor Ralph G. Allen . . . who conceived the show with producer Harry Rigby, presented to a conference of theatre historians at New York's Lincoln Center in November, 1977.

Then they developed a show with a nostalgic and funny look at all the great acts thru the years. Many are incorporated in "Grind" and they fail but the crazy, zanniness of Mickey Rooney carries "Sugar Babies" through.

This is the home of the "Star Spangled Banner"and this show opens with the audience standing and singing the national anthemn.

Rooney has many little jokes like when the MC says he's a man short, Ronney replies "I'm your man, I've been short all my life."

Of course there are the Sugar Babies and the veteran comics Mickey Deems and Phil Ford. They are hilarious in the "Meet Me Round the Corner" number with to the music of "I Want A Girl." This is one of the most famous of burlesque scenes, originally based on the Homestead Quartet, a minstrel show afterpiece.

Then there's the "Travelin' " number where the Sugar Babies dance on suitcases . . . The salute to Sally Rand called "Feathered Fantasy," a Salute to Ed Wynn in "Don't Blame Me" with Jane Summerhays singing the torch song while riding a bicycle handlebars.

Finally the first finale with a Minstrel Show and Mickey Rooney as a hilarious Countess Francine. This is done in black light and a tribute to the Rentz Troupe which were popular until 1925. Black light minstrel shows were first seen as early as 1904.

In the Famous Little Red Schoolhouse number Jane hits Mickey so hard his hat and wig fall off and the actors and actresses laugh so hard you don't know whether this is an act or an accident.

It's hard to say when we laughed hardest, during "The Court of Last Resort" number or "Presenting Madame Alla Gazaza." The opening night audience just laughed and laughed throughout the two hours.

In the "Greek Garden" number when Julie is covered with doves while singing "Warm and Willing" one Dove misses and the audience is intent in hoping he'll make it to his perch . . . which he doesn't.

Ventriloquist Jeff Dunham stops the show when he gets two dummies, a Tic Tac box and a pepper on a stick to all talk at once. The audience gives another wild ovation to Frank Olivier the juggler who manages to look awkward while riding a unicycle and juggling knives.

"Sugar Babies" is one of the best musicals around today and if you miss it . . . shame on you.

Mr. Show Business himself . . . Mickey Rooney flashed his famous smile, batted his baby blue eyes and conducted his own press conference . . . a first for the Baltimore press corps Tuesday on the mezzanine of the Lyric Opera House just an hour before opening of "Sugar Babies."

And, while Mrs. Hope Quackenbush and other theatre personnel tried to hurry Mickey . . . he announced early he wanted to be called Mickey . . . he said he had plenty of time and proceeded to tell the press everything he wanted them to know. "The show won't go until I get there." The press seemed shy . . . only about four or five questions were asked . . . but they were enough to keep him going.

Mickey Rooney has 100 films to his credit in every medium of entertainment and since opening on Broadway in "Sugar Babies" on Oct. 8, 1979, he has been honored world-wide.

Most of us remember him from his film in 1939 with Judy Garland, "Babes In Arms" (late-night TV) or from the Hardy family films. His most recent film, "The Black Stallion" with Baltimore-born Clarence Muse, won him another Academy Award nomination. He also won a Golden Globe Award and rave reviews for his moving performance in the CBS-TV drama "Bill."

Mickey seemed to be dead serious as he started off the press conference with "Hollywood is dead. All it needs is a casket and a day to hold services." He bemoaned the fact that actors and actresses don't have the fraternal bond that you find among basketball, football and baseball players. He says-actors and actresses don't speak to each other off the screen. They have a divide and conquer mentality and have the attitude, "I've got mine . . ."

He allowed that everything changed in Hollywood after World War II and only eight or nine people are allowed to make pictures today. "Isn't that a frightening thing?" he asked and then went on to name some of the chosen few . . . Burt Reynolds, Woodie Allen, Clint Eastwood and Charlie Bronson. He touched on Belushi who was not able to "accept his own God given talent."

The AFRO asked if he had ever played Baltimore in his long career and he hesitated and was reminded that he once played Painters Mill. He said he remembers playing a Rappaport theatre but doesn't remember which one. He also remembers Baltimore's Clarence Muse, who died right after making "The Black Stallion" and says "he loved him very much."

He then explained that "Sugar Babies" is a burlesque show "making fun of and making fun with." There's no such thing as a script, there's only double entendres (called blackouts).

"I'm not going to work in 1986. My real name is Yule . . . I'm a Scotsman fifth generation on my father's side" he told the press.

He says that 18 years ago he became a born-again Christian and "I'm glad to testify for my Lord Jesus. I'm still making mistakes but I'm working on being a better individual. Until 'Sugar Babies' I was a has-been but it has all been due to my Lord Jesus Christ."

He touched on some of his many projects including his 12 race horses at Hollywood Park, his Mickey Rooney's "Weenie Worlds" a nationwide fast food chain and his Talent Town USA, a school to help promote crative children in the entertainment field.

As he wound down the interview he allowed he had been married eight times but had been happily married to Jan for 11 years. He wouldn't give her last name (It's Chamberlain) but he says she is the greatest country - western singer in the world but she refuses to go on the road.

The show's press book says that Mickey is the father of 10 children and seveal grandchildren from his combined marriages. He will turn 65 in September; is 5 foot 3 inches and taller than Judy Garland.

One reporter with a lot of gall asked Mickey which of his wives would he marry again. Mickey took that one in stride and answered, "all of them." "Many a night my heart's had to bleed," he said. "The wife always gets the inside of the house and you get the outside." He admits he married too early.

## Mickey says he owes it all 'to my Lord, Jesus'

# Showtime

## Ida M. Peters What's Happening

## Celebrities

### Richie triple winner at ASCAP dinner

LIONEL RICHIE was a triple winner at ASCAP's Pop Awards Dinner held May 2 at the Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Los Angeles. Richie was named ASCAP's writer of the year for the second year in a row; his smash "All Night Long" was declared song of the year; and his publishing house Brockman Music was judged publisher of the year.

Richie had three other compositions on ASCAP's list of the 60 most performed songs: "Running With The Night," "Stuck On You" and "Three Times A Lady," the latter a Commodores' hit from 1978.

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TINA TURNER'S upcoming concert tour, set to kick-off in July and run thru December will be sponsored by Pepsi-Cola. The soft drink biggie also sponsored the Jackson's Victory Tour and the 1984 tour of Lionel Richie. Tina will perform 90 performances in 70 cities.

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The ambitious all-star benefit concert in tribute to COUNT BASIE in Atlantic City touted for May 5 didn't happen. Concert was postponed to Sept. 15, reportedly because not enough tickets were sold.

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GLADYS NIGHT & The Pips are seeking to diversify and grow without alienating a loyal and protective audience. Gladys is making her biggest step to date outside of the group, filming a TV pilot with Flip Wilson for a family situation comedy called "Charlie & Co.".

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The legendary FOUR TOPS, for over twenty years one of the most popular and beloved of the original Motown artists, will take over the video airwaves this month starting with their appearance on Motown Returns to the Apollo, hosted by Bill Cosby set to air on Sunday, May 19 at 8 p.m. The TOPS can next be seen on the CBS Special "Yearbook Class of 1967" hosted by Patrick Duffy of Sallas, Betty Thomas of Hill Street Blues, Natalie Cole and Lyle Alzado of the Los Angeles Raiders, due to air Tuesday, May 21. Appearing with the TOPS will be Frankie Vallie and the Four Seasons and Judy Collins. June 1 will see the TOPS sharing the bill on "Soul Train" with Spandau Ballet, and soon thereafter, "Motown Revue Starring Smokey Robinson," the pilot for a projected new Fall series, will showcase the TOPS along with De Barge, Vanity and Stevie Wonder.

The Swinging Seniors scheduled to appear at the official "Amateur Night Grand Reopening" of the famed Apollo Theatre in NYC, May 22. From (L) Ruby Riley, Lyle Smith, Myrtle Hawkins, Elinor McQueen, Temple Fletcher, and Chickie Martin. Now in their 70's, they were members of the Apollo chorus lines of the 30's and 40's.

## Top Hits

**Top R&B Singles**
1. We Are the World USA For Africa
2. Rhythm of the Night DeBarge
3. Fresh Kool & the Gang
4. In My House Mary Jane Girls
5. Smooth Operator Sade

**Top Jazz Albums**
1. Hot House Flowers Wynton Marsalis
2. Straight to the Heart David Sanborn
3. Magic Touch Stanley Jordan
4. 20-20

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LOUIS FARRAKHAN: WHAT'S HE UP TO NOW?

"I don't think that Jesse Jackson can look forward to my support four ) rs from now."
—Louis Farrakhan

Minister Louis Farrakhan, the outspoken leader of the Nation of Islam, talks candidly with Tony Brown in an exclusive two-part special, "The Views and Solutions of Louis Farrakhan."

Part I covers Farrakhan's association with The Rev. Jesse Jackson, his controversial charges that Black politicians are "puppets," his break with Malcolm X, and his response to charges of anti-Semitism.

In Part II Brown examines Farrakhan's new economic program—"P.O.W.E.R.," his religious beliefs, and his response to Mayor Andrew Young's labeling him a "demagogue."

Tony Brown covers it all as only he can. You won't want to miss it.

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WAPB - Ch: 22 - May 22 @ 10:30 PM

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See for yourself. Check your local public television listings for dates and times of Tony Brown's Journal. Don't miss it.

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