Theater of Nations asessment

The Theater of Nations Festival was an interesting gathering and it gave Baltimoreans a chance to see what is happening in theater circles in other countries. It was also an opportunity for Baltimoreans who could communicate in various languages to get to know theater artists from around the world.

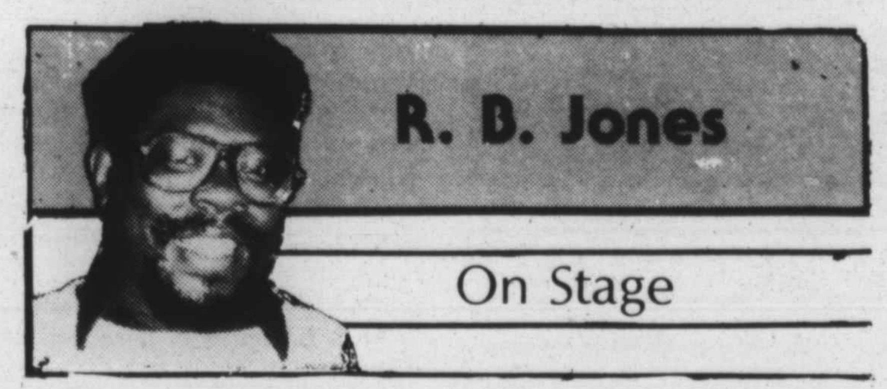
For a little while Baltimore was an artistic center. I was disappointed however, that the festival did not feature any theater groups from Africa or the Carribbean.

Black people were represented by Kuumba a local group of New Federal Theater production "Williams and Walker" out of New York and an embarrassingly inept Arena Players production "We're Moving On."

I did not see the Kuumba production although the reports I received were favorable. The two productions I did see present an interesting contrast.

Williams and Walker

I must admit that I am prejudiced about this play. I saw the author Vincent Smith perform the play when it was a one character show some years ago. I have



watched the author agonize with this play for a number of years.

After viewing the finished product I see that his efforts were worth it. "Williams and Walker" concerns the partnership of Bert Williams and George Walker a black comedy and song and dance team that was the toast of Broadway in the early 1900s. Williams, a native of Antigua West Indies wanted to be a Shakespearean actor. Racism in American entertainment forced him to play the blackface makeup buffoon.

George Walker, Williams' song and dance specialist partner took Williams under his wing and together the men launched a pioneering team. Walker was the show business veteran who took Williams under his wing and taught the man the realities of American entertainment.

Ben Harney as Williams gives a superb performance. He evokes laughter, but more importantly he evokes pathos. Williams' life is essentially tragic because he never gets to play Hamlet on stage the way he wanted to and he becomes trapped in the blackface character he portrays reluctantly on stage.

Even when he is a Broadway headliner, after the death of partner Walker, at the Ziegfeld Follies there is an ever present air of melancholia around Williams.

Harney paints each emotion that Williams feels across his face. His performance is sensitive and moving as if he actually feels the sadness that haunted Williams at the very moments he is making hundreds of people laugh. When Harney sings "Nobody" or "I'm Just a Jonah Man" one is viewing a tragedy equal to anything Shakespeare ever wrote.

Vondie Curtis-Hall gave an energetic performance as Walker a man driven to achieve success in show business and willing to make the compromises necessary to ensure that success.

"Williams and Walker" is a moving, informative, and ultimately inspiring evening of theater. It does justice to the memory and the legacy of Williams and Walker.

We're Moving On

"We're Moving On" was the Arena Players presentation for the Theater of Nations Festival and it was a mistake of the highest order. The production featured shallow characters in an implausible situation.

Ed Heath who wrote directed and starred in the play desperately needs to study playwriting. The plot was full of holes. A church is having a rally to raise money to move to a new edifice.

After the money is collected at the service, two deacons take the money to the bank. They return shortly claiming to have been robbed. By a very unlikely and unbelievable chain of happenings the church recovers the money and discovers that a deacon had tried to steal the money.

The plot had more holes in it than the victims of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. The staging was amateurish in the most negative sense of the term amateur. Characters were frequently lined across the stage violating the simplest rules of blocking.

The characters were severely underwritten and extremely stereotypical. It was very apparent that the characters were merely devices to get performers on stage to do their various specialities.

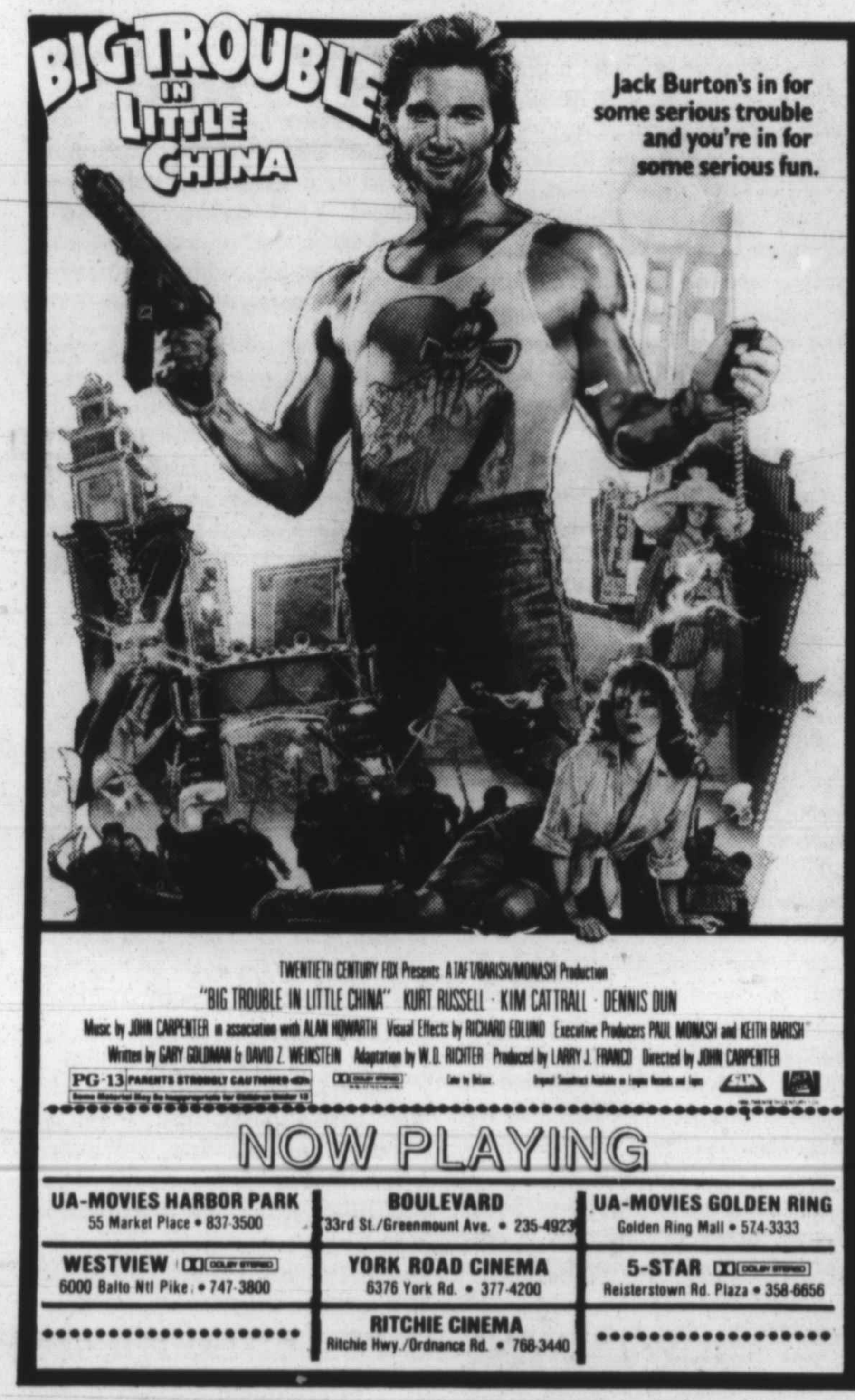
Any momentum that is built in the slender plot is frequently interrupted by performers doing bits that have no relation to the play at all.

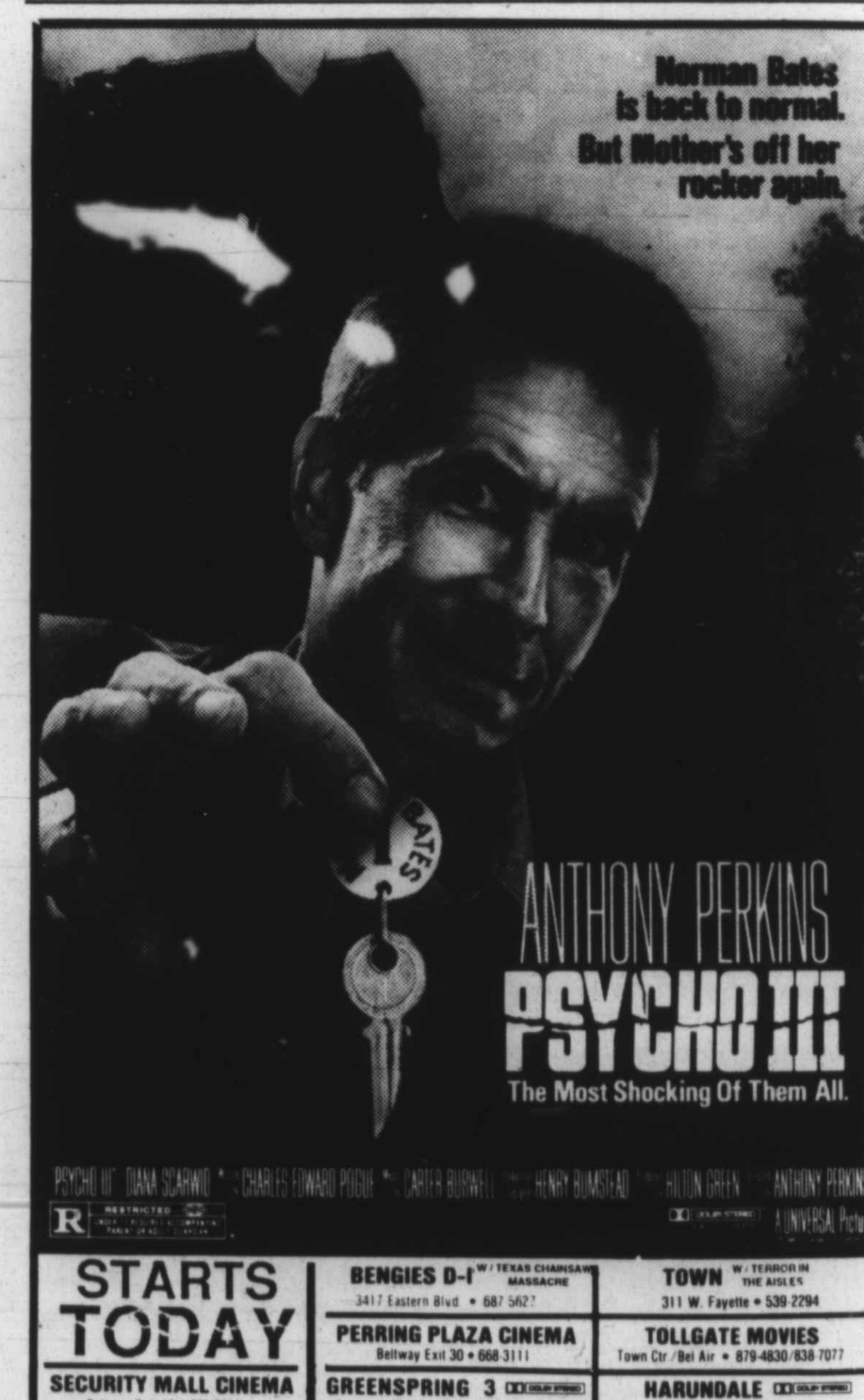
The music in the play is seemingly just thrown in to give individuals a chance to solo. The play "We're Moving On" is not even up to the level of a workshop production and the Arena Players were very ill-advised to enter this motley collection of unrefined pieces into an international theater festival showcasing professional theater groups.

Showcase Of Nations Festivals Schedule

The Showcase Of Nations Ethnic Festivals will feature food, music, dancing, and crafts of weekends throughout July, August, and September. For more information call 837-4636. Scheduled are:

July 25-27	Italian Festival	Festival Hall
August 1-3	Afro-American Festival (AFRAM)	Festival Hall
August 8-10	Caribbean/West Indies	TBA
August 15-17	German Festival	Canton Lots
August 16-17	India Days Festival	Festival Hall
August 22-24	American Indian	Festival Hall
August 23-24	Hispanic Festival	Hopkins Plaza
Aug. 31-Sept. 1	Jewish-American	Hopkins Plaza
Sept. 6 & 7	Ukrainian Festival	Festival Hall
Sept. 13 & 14	Irish Festival	Festival Hall
Sept. 27	Korean Festival	Hopkins Plaza





MTV bans clip as being too twisted

By Frank Lovece

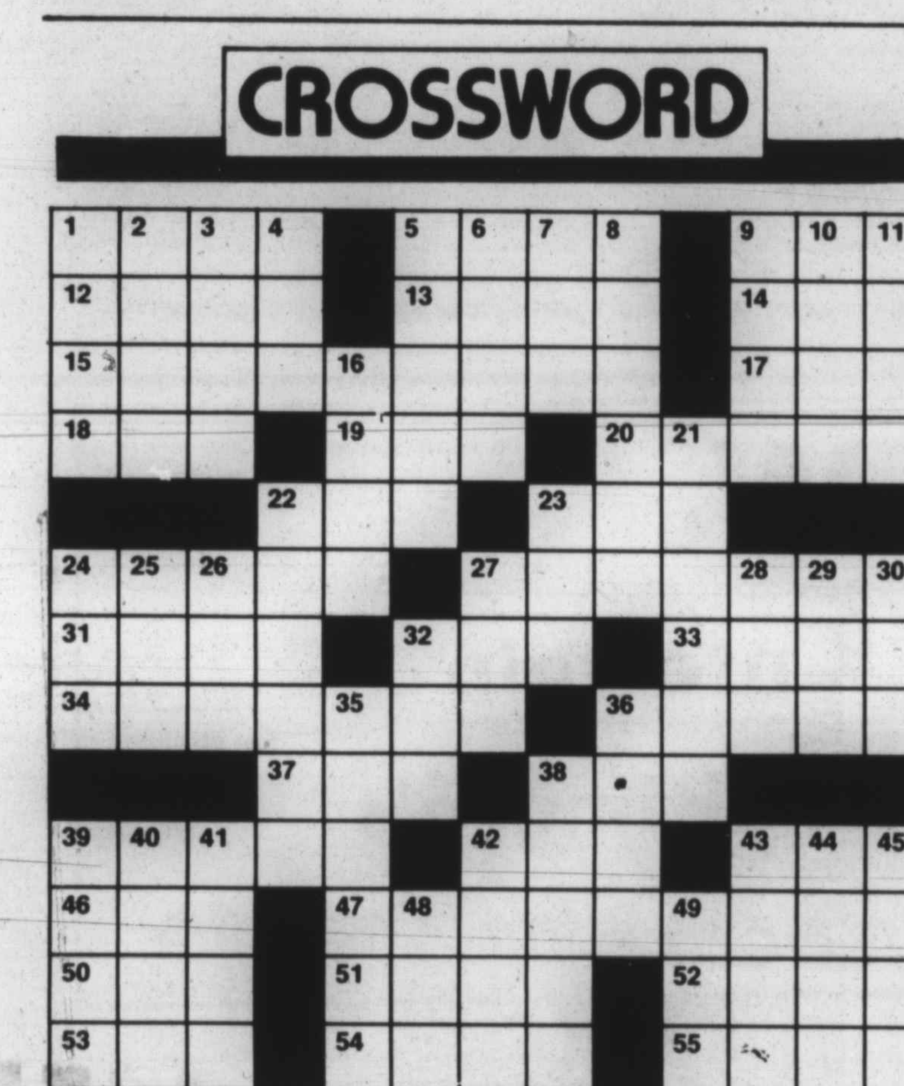
Marty Callner is one of the most sought-after directors in music video. Lately, he's also become one of the most chased-after.

First, Callner's slapstick clip for Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It" was misinterpreted by the U.S. Senate and an anti-rock pressure group last summer. Now, MTV has banned Callner's latest clip, a teenage-zombie comedy shot for Twisted Sister's Beach Boys pastiche, "Be Chrool to Your Scruel." Lacking the clout of Michael Jackson -- whose similiar, though horrific, "Thriller" played almost constantly on MTV -- Callner is understandably upset.

"I think it's the most ridiculous, inane decision I've ever heard," says the 45-year-old director in

Continued on page 8

CROSSWORD



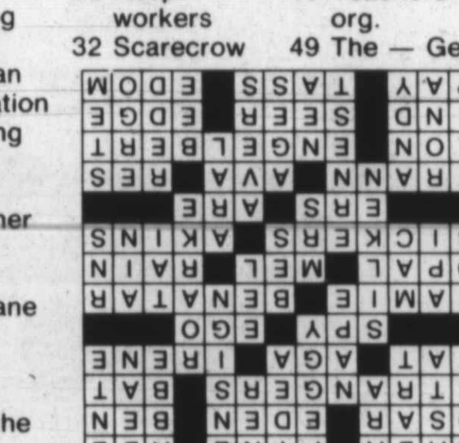
By DANIEL M. MARVIN

ACROSS

1 Moslem Negroids
5 Robert —
9 — Vigoda
12 Glacial ridges
13 Barbara —
14 Mr. Vereen
15 Perfect —
17 Night flyer
18 Make lace
19 Moslem chief
20 Actress Dunne
22 Government agent
23 Self
24 Actor Farr
27 Singer Pat —
31 Precious stone
32 Tillis or Torme
33 Weather word
34 Quarrels
36 Claude —
37 Bitter vetch
38 100 square meters
39 Newhart co-star Mary
42 Miss Gardner
43 Thing, in law
46 — Chaney
47 — Humperdinck
50 India, poetic
51 Soothsayer
52 — of Night
53 Wages
54 Soviet news agency
55 Biblical kingdom

DOWN

1 Donny —
2 Movie dog
3 — Braverman
4 Constellation
5 — Fleming
6 Notion
7 Saul's grandfather
8 Naval graduate
9 Singer Lane
10 Orson —
11 Grafted: heraldry
16 Back of the neck
21 Fantasy Island host
22 Smooth and glossy
23 Slippery fish
24 Book of the Bible
25 Himalayan mountain
26 Actor Davis
27 God of pleasure
28 Certain Malay native
29 Own: Scot.
30 Hosp. workers
32 Scarecrow and — King
35 Mr. Borgnine
36 Inland sea
38 Declares
39 Comic Wilson
40 Columnist Barrett
41 Griffith or Warhol
42 Matures
43 Actor Foxx
44 Therefore: Latin
45 Hold back
48 Teachers' org.
49 The — Gees



—JAZZ

Continued from page 5

tuner hard at work getting things ready for the next set, which was the Joanne Brackeen Trio, and this was another one of the high points of the festival.

Joanne, as she is wont, made several excursions into the "outside," but always returned and resolved that last chord. She mixed standards and originals, culminating in a song composed about her cat.

Chuckled to hear someone in the audience comment that she certainly must have hated that animal, for the piece was pyrotechnic, to say the least.

She was accompanied by Clint Houston, bass, and Billy Hart, drums. And after she finished, they had to tune the piano again.

Chris Connor was there with her trio, evoking memories of the great big band days of Stan Kenton and such, to the delight of a segment of the audience who came solely to hear her performance. Must say, she has held up well.

Then came the piece de resistance for the day when Jon Faddis led his quintet on. With Jon--Greg Osby, sax; James Williams, piano, Phil Bowler, bass, and Tony Reedus, drums.

Faddis showed that he had no peer when it comes to trumpet playing, he even cracked a little joke when he introduced himself -- tongue in cheek -- as "Wynton Mar....."

Highlight of the performance was his tribute to Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie, playing in their styles, dredging memories of Louie and Diz in their youth.

This was simply breathtaking music and the artistry of Faddis will be talked about, at least until his appearance here in Baltimore at Artscape.

* * *

Sunday saw the Pepper Adams Quintet on stage with Pepper on baritone sax; Valery Ponomarev, trumpet; Reuben Brown, piano; Rufus Reid, bass, and Billy Hart, drums.

Saw Pepper at dinner Saturday, and noted he looked extremely fragile. Discovered later the he is suffering from cancer, and evidently the treatments he is undergoing causes his pallor.

Didn't diminish his playing one whit, however, for Pepper blew like there is no tomorrow. He was simply brilliant. In fact, he closed his set with a little-known tune by the great Duke Ellington baritone saxist, Harry Carney.

It was a plaintive melody which simoply, and movingly brought on a peace and tranquility with just plain mellifious sound. Absolutely gorgeous.

Wrapping up things was tenor saxist George Coleman, who showed that circular breathing is a natural part of sax work, and showed that he is in the league with Coltrane and Sonny Rollins when it comes to tenor sax.

George looked fit -- he was slimmer, clear-eyed and blowing straight ahead. The "house" rhythm section backed him, with Reuben Brown, piano; Rufus Reid, bass, and Billy Hart, drums.

Have to comment a bit on the work of Reuben at this fest. He simply outdid himself. Noted that he was watching Joanne Brackeen, and she stood to watch him, and they inspired each other, although neither will probably admit it. Reuben was better than we've ever heard him.