SOUNDS

By Carl Matthews

CHERYL "PEPSII" RILEY
"Me, Myself And I" (Columbia)

"Me, Myself And I" is the first album by a singer from Brooklyn who appeared on recent albums by Full Force and the Weather Girls.

Cheryl's debut album is produced by Full Force (Bowlegged Lou, Baby Gerry, Paul Anthony, Curt-t-t, B-Fine and Shy Shy), the band who's dynamic sound has been a part of such hot hits as "Head To Toe" by Lisa Lisa And Cult Jam and "Roxanne, Roxanne" by UTFO.

The album starts off jumpin' with "Sister Knows What She Wants," in which Pepsii expresses feelings of assertion and self-respect in a manner similar to that of Janet Jackson's "Control." The mellow single, "Thanks For My Child" has a nice gospel sort of feel, and the duet with Full Force, "Every Little Thing About You," brings back memories of the old Smokey Robinson classics.

This is another slick, solid album from the Full Force stable.

Music Notes

Compact discs (CDs) have been around for almost five years. No doubt some of you are still pondering whether to acquire a CD player. And those of you who have CD players are pondering over which CDs to purchase.

It would be very nice if most stores would let you audition CDs before you buy them. Especially since the making of CDs is so vulnerable to Murphy's Law. In other words, if anything can possibly be wrong with a CD...

CHERYL "PEPSII" RILEY

Most CDs are okay, but some CDs have minor flaws that can be quite annoying to the CD connoisseur — things like: tracks on a CD appearing with the first 3 seconds or the last 3 seconds clipped off, mislabeling, etc.

So, I figured I'd make the following suggestions to those buying CDs.

— When buying oldies compilations, be very careful and read that box carefully. Lots of CDs have versions of old tunes that are **not the original** hit versions. (Look for clues like: year of release, personnel, production credits). Also, lesser known companies (whose names may be unfamiliar to many listeners) sometimes release versions of hits that are not of the highest possible fidelity.

— Be extremely careful when buying CDs that are reissues from a 2-record set released on one disc. The odds are very good you will be disappointed. Why? Because in many cases the material that was originally released on two LP records will not all fit on one compact disc; so the record company will either leave off a song or two or cut a song down to make it fit. For example: getting the Temptations albums "Cloud Nine" **and** "Puzzle People" on one disc sounds like a good deal — but one track (the hit single "Runaway Child Running Wild") was cut in half.

— If you're looking for the full length version of a favorite hit single, in some cases, it **won't** be found on the greatest hits disc by the artist, but on the CD of the album that the single originally came from (even if there's enough room on the greatest hits CD for the full-length track). Example: the full length version of Manhattan Transfer's "Twilight Tone/Twilight Zone" will be found on the CD of "Extensions," **not** on "The Best Of Manhattan Transfer." The full length version of The Doobie Brothers' "Listen To The Music" is on "Toulouse Street," not "The Best Of The Doobies." (This kind of thing happens more often than it should, I think).

— Many CD outer packages feature far less information than it should. For example, the Beatles "Past Masters Volume Two" CD features "Get Back." You might think at first that this is the same recording that's on the "Let It Be" CD — until you open the package and discover it's a different mix of the tune. Have you ever bought a CD thinking it's a studio album, only to take it home and find that it's a **live** album?

Even if you shop carefully, you may still find a problem. If you have an LP that's, say, about 40 minutes and sounds fine, and then you bring home the CD version and it's only 25 minutes long and sounds horrible, you know something's wrong, and you should take it back to the store (return policies vary, according to which label issued the CD, etc.)

It pays to be smart when CD shopping. 'Nuff said!

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—About TV

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Sunday, October 2
"THE AFRICANS: A Legacy of Lifestyles" (5-6:00 p.m.) Part 2. An exploration of how contemporary African lifestyles are influenced by indigenous, Western, and Islamic factors. Channel 26.

Monday, October 3
"ONE O'CLOCK MOVIE: Brother John (1-2:30 p.m.) Sidney Poitier stars. Channel 45.

'Hunting Cockroaches' on stage in D.C.

By Sherri Milner
AFRO Staff Writer

What's wrong with cockroaches?

They bring lots of laughs and a look at real life in "Hunting Cockroaches", a play by Janusz Glowacki being performed at the District's Studio Theatre.

While minorities who are born citizens of the U.S. are familiar with the injustice and hard times here, the audience sees this plight through the eyes of an exiled Polish couple who come to the States after hearing of the "boundless opportunities and sense of freedom" that America offers.

In the lower east side of Manhattan, Anka and Jan live in a world where the dispossed are treated much like the cockroaches. They discover an America where the little man can get stepped on and crushed for just trying to survive.

They must confront overdue rent, failed job interviews, insomnia and hallucinatory night visitors. In spite of the hardships Jan and Anka face, the play is devoid of self-pity. The audience finds the couple's persistent efforts to adjust to their transplanted life sensitive and humorous.

"A smart man never writes, a smart man never leaves any trace behind him," one of the nightmare policemen tell Jan. But Glowacki is more than a smart man. He is an artist, and so, is a writer. "Hunting Cockroaches" is the story of the playwright's life as an emigre in search of the American dream.

Anka is played by Ludmila Bokievsky, an actress born in Russia. While in the Soviet Union, she performed as a leading company member in Kiev and Jaroslavl.

Co-starring as her husband, Jan, is Ken Magee, who will be recognized from televison appearances on "Mark and Mindy", "Police Story" and "Police Woman". His film credits include "The Postman Always Rings Twice", "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" and the soon to be released "Mississippi Burning".

The cast also includes DC actors Margaret Didden, Brian Hemningsen, Mitchell Patrick, Joseph Pinckney, Scott Smith, Susan Walton and Alan Woodward.

"Hunting Cockroaches" will rotate with another play in the Studio Theatre's Fall Repertory, "Shooting Magda" by Jahua Sobol, through Nov. 20.

—All That Jazz

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At 8 p.m. in the Lisner Auditorium of GWU, the **Geri Allen Octet, Henry Threadgill Sextet, Henry Butler Quartet** will be featured. More information: (202) 543-4119.

Dianne Reeves

Johnny Kemp — Versatility is his key

By Darryl Elwood Owens
AFRO Staff Writer

While Johnny Kemp is not a commissioned pilot, his second album, "Secrets of Flying," certainly has landed the Caribbean-born singer on the airstrip to success.

"I wanted to make a record that was versatile, a record that was socially aware that said something about the world we live in, I wanted to make a meaningful contribution, and I think I accomplished that. And I hope that that kind of feeling, that kind of vibe was communicated," Kemp said.

Kemp spoke with the AFRO minutes prior to his recent concert at American University.

After a two year hiatus from recording, which Kemp called a "creative development" stage, he is soaring up the dance charts with summer's monster dance cut "Just Got Paid," the first single from his second album for Columbia Records.

Kemp said the idea for "Just Got Paid" stemmed from "Life. Everybody gets paid, everybody's walking on the street talkin' 'bout 'paid in full,' so, I said, 'Hey! Let's write a song about getting paid."

"We kinda combined some elements. It's a song that's lyrically interesting and it just makes you feel good. It's got all kinds of rhythm in it. But I'm not going to sit down and try to figure out what it is (that made it such a hit)."

"Secrets of Flying," which was co-produced by Teddy Riley (whose credits include Keith Sweat's "I Want Her"), was primarily written by Kemp is a balanced work including dance jams like "Just Got Paid," and the percussion-powered "Dancin' With Myself," along with aphrodisiac-tinged ballads including "Feeling Without Touching" and "My Only Want is You."

"I write a large portion of my music but, I don't limit my records to what I'm trying to get across. I collaborate with a lot of people to get many perspectives and points of view to give the album more depth and more of a range," he said.

"But I try to be involved as much as possible because I am closest to me so what I want to say and what I want to project nobody knows that better than me."

JOHNNY KEMP—The multi-talented Bahamian-born singer, songwriter, musician, dancer and actor who enjoyed much success with his hit "Just God Paid," hopes to see his latest single "Dancing With Myself" do just as well.

While "Just Got Paid" has received critical acclaim the rest of "Secrets of Flying" alternatively been panned by critics to given a stamp of approval. A Rolling Stone critic while acknowledging "Just Got Paid" as a bona fide hit, deemed the rest of the album "unremittingly earthbound."

"I'm very happy and very proud of my record," Kemp countered "I never listen to critics whether it be movies or whether it be music. The public owes it to itself to check out stuff for themselves because I don't think we can depend on somebody else's tastes to decide what you like."

"I disregard a lot of stuff that is presented in the media (and) if they (the public) don't have the individuality to think for themselves, too bad for them."

The Nassau-born singer/writer/producer/arranger/dancer remembers displaying his sense of individuality early on. Kemp, who grew up in a family of ten children, recalls competing for attention and seeking the limelight even as a child.

The whole Kemp family sang, primarily in church, where Johnny Kemp and his brothers developed a reputation as a family gospel group. The 12-year-old child prodigy got hooked on secular music during this time and started playing clubs — although he was underage.

From these experiences, Kemp earned a featured spot with the Mighty Makers, a popular island band who mostly "covered" American hits. His first paying gig earned him a windfall of ten dollars. At age 13 "Little Johnny" had developed into a major island star.

Following stretches with the group Fox Fire and a lead vocal assignment on Change's "Sharing Your Love" album and his first hit with the BBQ Band, who commissioned him to write four songs on their "All Night Long album, he hit the charts in April, 1986 with his self-title first solo album.

"You learn compromise, you learn diplomacy, and I learned a lot about the actual production," Kemp said of his experiences from his first album.

He said the difference between his first album and "Secrets" is "I was much more in control of this album and it's a much more real representation of what I am about."

Kemp, whose music has been called an amalgamation of rap and crooning by some music writers, has often been pigeonholed in that category with New York-based singers like Sweat, Tony Terry and Al B. Sure! But, he balks at such characterizations.

"I don't classify my music, I leave that up to you (the public). I hate categorization and classification. Music is music. There's good and there's bad, music that turns me on and music that doesn't," Kemp said.

"I try to avoid formulas. If it feels good that's what I do. People have a tendency to encapsulate things and that's unhealthy. When you get down to it all music and all artists are jumbled."

He added, "Variety is the spice of life. I try to do as many different things as possible. I think to do too much of one or the other is wrong. I try to mix it up."

Kemp noted he was influenced by artists such as Marvin Gaye (who he pays tribute to on "Secrets" with the Gaye medley "Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)" and "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology Song)) and certain current hitmakers.

"I try to listen to as much (music) as I can, but, it's difficult to keep up nowadays with so much out there. I like mellow stuff. Some of the new wave stuff I like. I like Tracy (Chapman) a lot. I like Terrence's (Trent D'Arby) stuff some of the time and Peter Gabriel and Stevie (Wonder)," he said.

"I try to listen to as much of everything that I can from some of the people that I admire and aspire to be kinda like."

Kemp explained while he admires their craft he does not attempt to emulate them as "I appreciate their music, their art, the ability to form pictures, and shape words musically, but when I approach writing a song I don't think about how Stevie would do this, I just communicate what I want to."

The interview over, Kemp danced out onstage and the audience "got paid in full."