

Entertainment Guide



by Allen Jones

Entertainment Ratings
Fair * Good ** Excellent ***

GEORGE BENSON - BAD BAD BENSON ***

Head shaking, foot stomping, good singing, guitar strumming, George Benson. He did everything but light a match!!! George Benson thoroughly enjoys what he does, and as the old folks would say, "You can see that with a half eye."

Contrary to popular belief, George Benson has been a professional for over ten years. True, he's young, but when you start at an early age you're better than the average entertainer before you know it. As Ms. Burton pointed out to me at the concert, "he sounds like Wes Montgomery." Indeed he does, George himself will tell you Wes Montgomery was his inspiration way back in the early sixties. Wes died of a heart attack in 1968, a monumental loss to the world of music. He was my idol and I wasn't alone. I can boast that I have every album Wes ever recorded. Wes Montgomery brought to music what Mohammad Ali brought to boxing!

Wes Montgomery brought innovation, style and class to the jazz scene, he was the "only" jazz guitarist to perfect playing octaves. But even more phenomenal was he played them with his thumb, which was unheard of. I caught him after just returning from Viet-Nam at "Memory Lane" night club in Los Angeles, he died six weeks later. He was a giant among giants.

Benson in his formative years sounded almost like him. Even now that Benson has his own identity he still possesses some of the flavor of Wes, as the lady pointed out. But if you want to scan the music scene today and look at all of your guitar players: Freddy Robinson, Jose Falliciano, Joe Pass, David T. Walker, Bill Withers and all of the other heavy weights, I would rate Benson Number "1". Just because I like him more, and I can relate to him a little better than the others.

Most of his selections were from two albums, "Bad Benson" and his latest "Breezin'". He played tunes like: "Take Five" (an old Dave Brubeck composition), "My Latin Brother," "No Sooner Said Than Done," "Full Compass," and more. Playing with George on the gig was Phil Upchurch, also on guitar; Kenny Barron on piano; Warren Covington and Steve Gadd on drums. George Benson is a perfectionist, and he's damn good at what he does!!

RON CARTER - A MELLOW GIANT ***

Being that jazz is my bag, for the most part, I suppose I've caught most of the "Big Name" jazz musicians. But Ron Carter is one that I hadn't seen until Saturday night at the Paramount. It surprises me too, because Ron has played back up for anybody that is somebody in jazz. Such as: Miles Davis, Blue Mitchell, the late Coletrane, Freddy Hubbard, Stanley Turrentine, Dizzy Gillespie, and the list goes on and on and on and on.

Needless to say Ron Carter is the best bassist I can think of. My reasoning is quite simple; he's the best and the best ask for Ron. Unfortunately, the bass is an instrument that very few people pay any serious attention to. Mainly because the bass has such a "muffled sound" to it. However, Ron has the ability to make it talk, which is extremely hard to do. Take the Miles Davis composition "So What" he played it very eloquently the other night. If standing ovations are any indication of Ron Carter's stature in the innovative bag of jazz, then so be it!!

THE GREG SMITH BAND - THEY'VE GOT IT TOGETHER ***

I hate being repetitious, but I was quite serious about "Fred's Place" having changed. As far as new talent continuing to come in. Greg Smith and his aggregation featuring: Harvey McDaniel on bass guitar and vocals; Rickey King also on guitar and vocals; Geno McGee piano and vocals; and hard driving Ron Marrisicini on drums. They are unquestionably the best local band I've heard in Portland. They have all of the qualities it takes to make it in the business. They are all accomplished musicians, as anyone could readily observe. They all work as a unit, and practicing is "something that must be done," according to Greg Smith. Their timing is very good and so are their musical selections. Take for an example their rendition of "Mr. Magic," a Grover Washington, Jr. composition. It's not exactly a tune that's easy to play. There are lots of intensity in "Mr. Magic" that involves - split second timing. Greg Smith's version is, tantalizing, tough and most definitely - together! They also did: "Who Is He" (And What Is He To You); "Sweet Thing," "Stop On By," "Sun Goddess," "Ain't No Love," (a Bobby Blue Bland composition), "What's Going On," "Wake Up Everybody," and more. Don't miss Greg Smith and his band at Fred's Place. They've got it together - Baby!!!

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ENTERTAINMENT

May 13-15 - Ramada Inn presents - Don Cunningham, a dynamite performer and a personal friend of mine. Check him out!!!
May 16 - Jazz De Opus presents - Art Blakeley, two shows at 6:00 and 8:00 p.m.
May 16th - Paramount presents - Count Basie. Need I say more?
Now appearing - at Fred's Place - The Greg Smith Band.
May 26th - Paramount presents - Neil Sedaka.

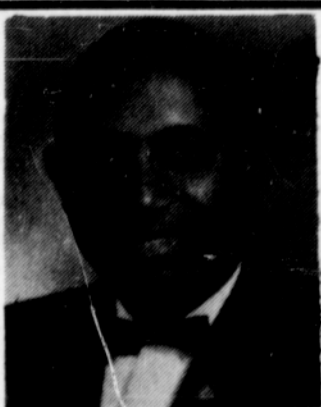
CHECK IT OUT

This week's column is dedicated to four women that I'll love forever, my mother and three aunts, Alice Hamilton, Catherine "Cat" Willie and Sweet Ruth Goynes. I love you madly!!!

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Natalie Cole recently made her Las Vegas debut at the Hilton with Bill Cosby and dazzled the audiences with her show. Rather than opt for a middle-of-the-road Vegas show which might have included a medley of Nat's songs, she caught the Vegas crowd off-guard with her earthy sounds which contrast so, with her famous father. Indications from the audience were that "her way" was just fine and that Natalie and success seem to be "inseparable" indeed.

Capitol Records will be releasing her second album this month, "Natalie," on which she has co-written two songs with her producers, Chuck Jackson and Matt Yancy.

Her itinerary calls for an appearance at the Newport Jazz Festival in Oakland, June 12th, followed by appearances in Japan June 22nd through July 6th.

College draws homemakers

Nearly 250 people have already registered for the 1976 Mini-College for Homemakers at Oregon State University June 21st through the 25th and it appears that attendance may set a new record this year.

That's the report from Alberta Johnson, OSU Extension area supervisor and college coordinator.

"It also means that some classes are beginning to fill up," Mrs. Johnston notes, "and those who get their registration in before the May 29th deadline will have the best chance of being assigned to the classes they have requested."

This is the third year of the program which is sponsored by the OSU Extension Service and the Oregon Extension Homemaker's Council. Last year, more than 500 attended.

Mini-college, which is open to all

homemakers - women, men or couples - features a variety of classes and college residence hall living, Mrs. Johnston notes.

The program includes nearly 100 different classes from which participants may choose. Subjects include such topics as legal rights of women, dealing with death, 200 years of fashion, food preservation, energy conservation, time management, Oregon pioneer women and land use planning.

The program opens with an orientation session on Monday evening and concludes Friday morning. A special feature will be the annual meeting of the Extension Homemakers' Council which represents Extension study groups from throughout the state. Helen Allen, Brookings, state president, will preside.

Cost for mini-college, including registration, room and board, is \$50. There are special fees for those who commute daily to the OSU campus in Corvallis.

Additional information and registration forms are available from OSU county Extension offices.

Elderly actress joins cast

Eighty-one-year-old character actress Opal Euard has been signed by producer-director George Schlatter for a role in Metro - Goldwyn - Mayer's "Norman...Is That You?", screen adaptation of the long-running stage comedy starring Redd Foxx and Pearl Bailey.

Ms. Euard, whose first film was the 1918 classic, "The Copperhead," starring Lionel Barrymore, joins previously announced Dennis Dugan, Vernee Watson, Mike Warren, George Furth and Tamara Dobson.

The screenplay for "Norman...Is That You?" was written by Ron Clark and Sam Bobrick in collaboration with Schlatter.

PLUS offers student aid

Graduating high school students and others interested in attending Portland State University this fall who do not meet regular admission standards or who may need special assistance have been encouraged to apply for PSU's Operation PLUS program by June 1st.

Operation PLUS - Paced Learning for Urban Students - offers special, individualized assistance in admissions, tutoring, counseling, housing, financial aids and academic advising.

Program Director Bill Wilkerson has encouraged students to apply who feel they have the potential for college-level work, but who do not meet regular University admission standards. In addition, he says students who meet standards but feel they will need extensive support can apply for consideration as "support service students."

The program combines traditional classroom work with tutorial assistance and special courses tailored to meet the needs and interests of students. All courses provide regular University credit.

Students must register for at least twelve credits per term to meet the program's academic requirements.

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