

Entertainment Guide



After a successful concert at the Civic Auditorium, Allen Jones (left) and A.B.C. recording star Lenny Williams (right), relax in the Green Room and talk about Lenny's up and coming tour of Europe. Including the "Voice Music Festival" the 29th of September.

by Allen Jones

BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS - THEY NEED GOLD • •

During the late 60's and early 70's, Blood, Sweat and Tears was a household name among pop rock bands. They had a string of hits that everyone could relate to - hits like: "And When I Die," "Lucretia McEvil," "Spinning Wheel," and their biggest "You Made Me So Very Happy." Every one of those songs turned Gold, but unfortunately that was eight years ago. They need Gold - now. After bitter internal problems the group disbanded.

David Clayton-Thomas, lead singer of Blood, Sweat and Tears, was the first to leave the group. After his departure, the remaining members just couldn't keep it together. Saturday nights performance, at the Civic Auditorium was acceptable. I thought many of the tunes were dragged on a little too long. Particularly when most of the songs are eight years old and everyone has heard them a hundred times before. David Clayton-Thomas is in good voice, and his back-up group played well.

However, if Blood, Sweat and Tears is planning to get back on the "Gold" bandwagon again, they'll have to do it soon. Eight years is a long time for any performer to be off the top Ten List. It would be unfortunate for a group like Blood, Sweat and Tears to end up on TV peddling oldies but goodies.

LENNY WILLIAMS - ON HIS • • •

I had the pleasure of introducing Lenny Williams to Portland Saturday night at the Civic Auditorium. Lenny Williams, as most of you know was the former lead singer of "Tower of Power" an Oakland, California based group, that eventually came into international prominence. In no way am I slighting the talent and professionalism of the other members of "Tower", but it was the vocal styling and showmanship of Lenny Williams that made Tower of Power famous.

Lenny Williams is a very special singer - not just because he was gifted with a pure voice and phenomenal range - and not just because he has developed outstanding control and vocal technique - but because Lenny combines these talents with the ability to reach out to his listeners and involve them in his music.

Lenny's performance Saturday night was outstanding! Most of the selections were taken from his latest album entitled "Choosing You". The album is already Number 6 on the charts and still climbing. During intermission I was approached by a young lady who commented, "Lenny Williams was an unexpected pleasure." I had to agree with her, he certainly was!

Born in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1945, Williams moved to Oakland, California when he was five years old, and has lived there ever since. He attended Oakland public schools and studied at several area colleges, including U.C. Berkeley.

At age, six, Lenny was singing with the children's choir at the Star of Bethel Baptist Church. As a teenager, he joined the Church of God in Christ, where he met Sly Stone, Edwin Hawkins, Dorothy Morrison and Billy Preston, who belonged to the same church in Los Angeles. Like most gospel singers, Williams was taught that vernacular music was "kinda sinful." At the age of sixteen, Williams was ordained a minister and travelled the country preaching.

A job in the stockroom at Oakland's Fantasy Records landed Williams next to John Fogerty, fellow stockboy, who later led Creedence Clearwater Revival to Gold Record fame on the small East Bay label. While working at Fantasy, Williams recorded a couple of obscure singles, including "Lisa's Gone," a song he'd written at the age of fourteen.

Four years passed and a hit song on the radio, "Sparkling in the Sand," turned Williams' attention to the first Tower of Power album, where he recognized the Motown Blue Eyed Soul Band from Fremont, now with a new name.

Another Oakland musician, Larry Graham, bassist with Sly and the Family Stone at the time, became interested in producing Williams and the pair spent some time rehearsing tunes, cutting demo tapes and planning the project. But as Graham's status with Sly Stone changed, so did his plans. The tunes went, instead, into the first album by Graham Central Station, Graham's own band.

At this point, Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records expressed interest, and Lenny spent four days recording in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. Before a tape was completed, Lenny had received feelers from Tower of Power and The Miracles and he chose Tower.

Lenny came on board officially to make his debut at a sold-out headline performance by the band at Bill Graham's Winterland in San Francisco. With only a few days of rehearsals, Lenny fit right in and the rest is history.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ENTERTAINMENT

August 23-28 - Ray Charles will be at the Hayloft Tavern.
August 26 - Marvin Gaye, Melba Moore and L.T.D. will appear at the Coliseum.
September 10 - Brothers Johnson will appear at the Paramount Northwest.
September 11 - Bob Merley will appear at the Paramount Northwest.
September 16, 17, and 18 - Chubby Checker will be at the Hayloft Tavern.

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Jordan promotes affirmative action in funded art

City Commissioner Charles Jordan expressed concern over the lack of minority participation in city funded art projects. He told the city council:

"I am increasingly concerned with what appears to be a lack of attention to public arts programs - with the exception of CETA - that aggressively seek to involve minority artists. Let me tell you why I think it is important for a local, publicly funded arts commission to do so.

"As a nation we endorse and legally mandate the concept of affirmative action. We now require, for example, a 10% set-aside of some federal funds for minority business enterprise. Whether or not the notion of set-asides is appropriate in the public funding of art projects, an affirmative action plan is as necessary in the field of art as it is in other fields. Explicit recognition should be given to working minority artists.

"I'm not going to tell the Arts Commission how this should be accomplished. They are the experts. But by using the four contracts before us as examples I want to suggest some of the ways the Arts Commission could begin to address minority concerns:

• The proposed contract with James Blashfield provides for the production of three one-minute mini-documentaries about artists and their work that are to be used as television public service announcements.

"Why shouldn't the MAC require that one of these documentaries focus on the work of a minority artist? This would be an excellent means of not only recognizing a working minority artist, but of enhancing community awareness, especially among young people, or minority artistic activity.

• The proposed contract with the Northwest Film Study Center provides for a free showing in Washington Park of

Films made by Northwest artists.

"Why shouldn't the contractor be encouraged to seek out and include in its program at least one film made by a minority artist?

"And why shouldn't it be required that publicity for this event make use of the minority media? Washington Park, and this film program, are paid for by all of Portland's citizens.

• The questions of publicity and access are equally important for the proposed Portland Symphonic Choir performances. I think the Council should be assured that these publicly-funded performances will be publicized and located in such a way as to be accessible and attractive to the most diverse audiences possible.

• Finally, the proposed contract with the School of Arts and Crafts Society is of special importance because it would bring crafts information into the public schools. Crafts are often closely tied to specific and diverse cultural traditions. I am concerned because I see no reference in the proposed contract to ethnic representation or cultural heritage. Surely these are important considerations if we want young people to truly understand and appreciate crafts and their origins."

Emily Carpenter, director of the Metropolitan Art Commission, told Jordan that the commission is committed to the inclusion of minorities and asked his assistance.

Ms. Carpenter said the Art Commission has tried to involve minorities but has not been very successful. Specifically, she has helped minority artists prepare proposals and has arranged for production at Jefferson High School and King Neighborhood Facility.

Of the 64 persons hired through CETA, eight or 12.5 percent have been minorities.

Paul Robeson subject of play

Producer Don Gregory has announced the return to Broadway of actor James Earl Jones as "Paul Robeson". The new one-man play was written by Phillip Hayes Dean about the life of one of the most extraordinary Americans of this century. Charles Nelson Reilly will provide the direction, with scenery and lighting created by H.R. Poindexter. The play will open February 1978 after a pre-Broadway tour.

Paul Robeson was the original "superstar", a rare combination of high intelligence, talent and personality. The All-American athlete graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Rutgers University, took his law degree at Columbia, became a world renowned concert singer, Broadway star, motion picture star, recording star and the toast of international society. He was received by royalty and heads of state and became a controversial political activist. And he was Black.

James Earl Jones is one of America's most versatile actors, having played everything from Shakespeare to television series. His career on the stage has ranged from the comedy of "Much Ado About Nothing" to the deep tragedies of "King Lear" and "Othello," all together over fifteen productions with Joseph Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival. The multi-talented Mr. Jones has received many awards including the Tony Award for his performance as Jack Jefferson in "The Great White Hope" on Broadway and an Oscar nomination for the film version. He has been highly acclaimed for his performances in such motion pictures as "Claudine," "The Bingo Long Traveling All-Stars and Motor Kings." His many television appearances have also garnered critical acclaim including his playing of Timothy in "The Cay," "King Lear," for PBS and Balthazar in Franco Zeffirelli's "Jesus of Nazareth."



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