

ENTERTAINMENT

# HAPPENINGS

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Grassroot News N.W. - The local crowd at Bourbon Street was treated to a musical experience beyond the jukebox with "The Greg Smith Show." The revue incorporated the City's newest talents along with local giants in the field. The group consists of Greg Smith, vocals and his counter-parts Anita McCowan and Alescia Locke, who really steal the show with their harmonies of old. Smith explained: "I've always wanted to do a show with a lot of variety and its more of a show than a revue."



## OLDIES BUT GOODIES "The Greg Smith Show" By Lanita Duke

Anita says, "Alescia and I joined the group in October prior to cutting the album which contains all original works and we had Mr. Lester McFarland as the captain of the rhythm section. It also includes Thara Memory, who arranged the horn lines."

As a local group did they have trouble breaking into the market? Greg answered, "Portland is a town where you have a one way political game in terms of music. You have a situation where you have punk rock and rock and roll getting more media than us. There seems to be some prejudice in terms of media exposure that depends on what some people like. It's a tough nut to crack but once you're in, that's it."

Other than the female vocalist, the bass player, Lester McFarland, is the dominate feature of the show. "I was born in Seattle and taught myself to play the bass. Later I played with Ester Phillips, Eddie Henderson and the Crusaders. A lot of people say why don't you go to New York but my response is that I was born here and I like it."

McFarland is a traditional jazz buff. "The new thing that is coming out that calls itself jazz really isn't. It's what you would call pop jazz or cross-over music. The big boys like Benson and Hancock have broken through and some of this other stuff is questionable."



## MIME IN THE LIBRARIES

The Oregon Mime Theater will present a series of Free children performances and solo Mime performances in the libraries during the week of August 11-15.

One would hardly expect to encounter a white-faced mime while searching through the library shelves! But Oregon Mime Theater members Francisco Reynders, Elizabeth Page and Burl Ross enjoy the element of surprise that Mime communicates. They will bring their special talents into these non-traditional, theatrical settings to expose this art of non-verbal communication to children and adults. These library settings will also give audience members a chance to meet and talk to the Mimes following the performance.

Due to the company's extensive out-of-state touring schedule, Oregon Mime Theater is rarely seen by audiences in Portland. The library performances will provide greater accessibility to the company's work through a variety of locations in the Portland metropolitan area.

## CAMEO CALMS THE NIGHT

The lights in the arena go dark. Hundreds of tiny flames flicker in anticipation. Then a deafening primal roar of 20,000 people rips the air apart, and with an explosion of smoke, stardust, and song, Cameo claims the night. Cameo, one of the most triumphant musical ensembles anywhere, has mastered the connection with its audience, whether live on stage or on record. And the group's newest album, graced with a deceptively simple title, "Feel Me," takes their music one step beyond.

"Feel Me" follows in a great tradition: with each successive album, Cameo has grown more and more popular, climbing higher and higher on the R&B and pop charts. Cameo's success knows no bounds because Cameo has never raised any barriers as to who they can reach.

Led by drummer/producer/founder Larry Blackmon, the ten-man group has synthesized a variety of influences to create its persona, everything from early Motown to Broadway musicals. Blackmon, a native of New York, idolized Jimi Hendrix fusion of R&B and Rock, and sees Cameo's music similarly. Having begun composing at the age of fourteen - he listened to James Brown, Otis Redding, and Cannonball Adderly - Blackmon formed a succession of bands, playing the same clubs under different names like the *Mighty Gees*, *Concrete Wall*, *East Coast*, and the *New York City Players*.



## CAMEO

After co-writer and guitarist (and now co-lead singer) Anthony Lockett and keyboardist Gregory Johnson joined him, Larry added vocalists Stephen Moore and Tomi Jenkins; bassist Aaron Mills; and horn section Nathan and Arnett Leftenant. Also in the group are trombonist Jeryl Bright and keyboardist Thomas "T.C." Campbell.

The stage shows are tightly choreographed, Larry explains, because "We go beyond the usual R&B groups in that we're all highly attuned to the art of showmanship. The way we emphasize emotions and moods, build momentum, utilize costumes and pace ourselves in very close to the traditional concept of theatre. Our shows become events worth seeing every year, whether there's a new album or not.

But now there is a new album, and if energy could ever be converted into vinyl, it would surely sound like, "Feel Me." All the drama Cameo brings to the stage has been captured in "Feel Me," making this the best Cameo album to date. Songs like "Keep It Hot" and "Your Love Takes Me Out" shows off the group's impeccable funk credentials, while "Better Days" and the beautiful title track prove that there are no better balladeers than Blackmon and company.

Cameo is emerging as one of the leading musical forces of the era. Just listen to "Feel Me" to know that there is no overstating the sheer musical and theatrical power of Cameo. You can't help but feel it!



(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

The songs that make the Greg Smith Show are traditional oldies but goodies from the Motown era that our parents knew and grooved on. "I sing something you can feel, not just a bunch of notes. We're singing from a time when the lyrics made sense." Greg begins to explain his concept. "I've been singing R&B for 18 years and will be singing another 30 or 40 years. The old style of soul will be coming back because people nowadays want something that's real. Folks don't need the watered down tunes or music that's just going through a phase."

There's one sound that you don't hear and that's Disco. Lester feels that Disco is just a 360 degree sound that is here today and gone tomorrow. Anita felt it as being a fad because now people are coming back to the roots of "jazz and soul; things that really mean something because you can say my grandmother used to sing this. People can relate to this."

The show opens with an instrumental by the sound section; Lester McFarland on bass; Wilbert Antoine providing a strong lead on guitar; with George Mitchell on keyboards and D.D. Wigs on drums.

The only item wrong or lacking in the Greg Smith Show is us, you know, that laid back Portland audience who's so cool that it isn't much of an audience. It's a shame...

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