

ENTERTAINMENT

HAPPENINGS

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Left to right: Pa-mela Hernandez, Diana Williams, Denise Aubray, Cynthia Grant

(Photo by Richard J. Brown)

Barnum & Bailey + Soul

Grassroot News, N.W.—From the concrete jungles of the big city to the sawdust of the big top, Afro-Americans are earning their pay and developing their talents through the circus. At the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus which recently toured Portland, five Afro-Americans stood up to be counted. The only Black clown to tour in this segment of Ringling Bros. is Skeeter Reece. "I started performing in a neighborhood unicycle troupe called the King Charles troupe in New York. That's how I got introduced to the Circus." That was eight years ago and for the last four skeeter has been a clown.

"As a clown I deal with improvisation. All the skits are unrehearsed. I look for something in the crowd or in the ring to make fun at or I can make fun at myself. I have learned a lot by traveling around the country and seeing how other people live. You have to learn a lot about different people and different nationalities."

Among the skits that are performed by Skeeter is one where a well-dressed man along with his lady is sitting in the park and along comes a hobo (Skeeter). He fusses, messes and just gets on the well-dressed man's nerve. At the end the hobo runs off with the lady's wig. Both young and old enjoyed this skit, which by the way is written by



SKEETER REECE

(Photo by Richard J. Brown)

Skeeter.

Along with the elephants, lions, tigers and bears are the show girls. Pa-mela Hernandez, Diana Williams, Denise Aubray and Cynthia Grant are the sisters you might have seen riding the elephants. "As showgirls we hang by our necks on a web, ride animals and dance. We saw the want-ads in the paper 20 months ago. To be a showgirl you have to be a dancer and know a little bit about gymnastics and you have to be into performing." All the girls emphasized the need to be professional at all times. "Sometimes we don't feel like smiling all the time but we do because it's part of our job. When we first got hired we were scared of the circus because we thought it was a bunch of crazies but after meeting and working here they are just like normal people. You learn to live with everybody and because there are so many people here from across the world it's like a little United Nations. You learn to share because you share four sinks with 20 other girls. Also you learn to do without. We have to do without a car and a phone." Asked if they did without men, their reply was it was an individual decision.

It's nice to know the greatest show on earth has a scattering of the greatest talents from our community.

Sam and Dave make big comeback

Grassroot News, N.W.—Out of the repetitious beat of the top 40s, away from the deafening amplification of pop music and more soulful than the R&B of today, the original soul men charmed the audience at Luis' La Bamba. Sam and Dave left a soulful impression on Portland. For many years Sam and Dave were quiet on the musical front. Dave

birth in original soul music? "I don't know if the public got tired of it but a lot of important people in the music industry began to look at the acts they had signed in a different way. For us it was Saturday Night Live and they did a movie with all our original materials along with a couple of cable TV shows and the next thing we know, Sam and



Sam and Dave Get Down With Soul

tainment. "I'm an entertainer. I try to reach as many people as I can but know that I can't pull all the people. You young kids think you're listening to something new. You are not. Your parents listened and loved Sam and Dave and now many rock-and-roll groups sing our songs. So where you think they got it from? We are happy and we're working almost every night in the week."

Tony at Luis' La Bamba ought to be supported financially for bring-

ing in acts that bring out a little soul in this country/rock Northwest. The music of Sam and Dave still has the quality of when music was still music instead of the carbon-copy songs that have dominated the young adults of the '80s. The fact that they're back in the act says that maybe the public can't be steered into what's good for them by a couple of marketing managers of the music industry. The way it should be is now the way it is.



Men of Soul

by Lanita Duke
Grassroot News Service

stated. "We wasn't into a retirement thing but it was the whole musical industry going through a change. In this change we traveled slower than some because we were hooked up in that Atlantic/Stax thing. Later the big record companies jumped on the stuff that was hot at that time, like Disco, and kinda forgot about the acts that they already had. They were just greedy and wanted to lock up everything." Well, disco got cold and now Sam & Dave are back. Dave smiled at this observation and said that old soldiers never die, they just fade away. What accounted for this new

Dave are back working." "Sam and I first hooked up in Florida and we toured the different gospel routes. I hadn't got into going to nightclubs but Sam had. One night I went to hear him and they pulled me on the stage. The audience loved us and we've been together ever since. Sam and Dave didn't write or produce any of our materials. Isaac Hayes and David Porter wrote a lot of our hits so it wasn't just us, and when a white group sings our music and makes a million dollars because everybody gets a piece of the pie." Dave views their act as pure enter-

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