

# HAPPENINGS

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## Act One

By Ken Covington



### PORTRAIT OF AN ENTERTAINER

Ladies and gentlemen introducing an illusion of Patti Labelle! The spotlight comes up and across the stage comes unleashed energy, stomping, bucking and flapping. If you don't pinch yourself you would swear it was the lady herself but underneath the jewelry, makeup and clothes is Wendel Jackson actor.

Some may call it female Impersonation but aside the fact that he does males too this is acting in rare form. Traditionally actors and actresses study script and bring it to life. Wendel studies entertainers hour after hour and brings them to you inch for inch. Dress, facial expressions, movement, attitude and style. This is not an easy task and to witness a performance you would think it was second nature, but being the perfectionist he is the homework has been done.

Ten years ago as a freshman at Franklin High School Wendel began drama classes and was an exceptional student. His instructor saw the potential and helped arrange a transfer to Jefferson High School known throughout the Northwest for their Performing Arts Department. Once again Wendel stood out and was accepted upon graduation to the Dance School of Harlem. This exposure to the arts and entertainment that New York offers along with intense study soon had Wendel confident, refined and hungry for a piece of the action.

At the urging of his friends Wendel entered a local lip sync contest as the dynamic Donna Summer. Wendel brought the house down and of course took first prize hands down. As the M.C. presented the prize he asked "her" name. The lady said Wanda Kentucky Jackson but my friends call me Wendel and with that removed the wig and took a bow. The audience roared, the management was wrecked and Wendel found home. This was a way to combine the talent and energy that is Wendel Jackson. Wendel left New York as a student for the last time. He vowed to return a star.



Wendel returned to Portland in 79 performing locally and the word spread from Salem to Seattle. Soon his bookings had him performing at least five days week after week. This gave him a chance to refine and combine lip sync, comedy and impersonation into one dynamic one man or woman show. Today his schedule includes California, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Texas, Arizona, British Columbia and Mexico. He has appeared on Town Hall, Dance Fever, American Bandstand, Puttin on the Hits and Eye on L.A.

Even though his travels have taken him far and wide his most memorable experience is here in Oregon. In late 84 a record store in Albany to appear as Prince at their grand opening. The news spread far and wide and on opening day Albany's population must have tripled. Wendel entered town in a Purple limosine and the streets were so crowded with screaming, shouting, crying fans that the limo could not get through. Along the route he was supposed to distribute pictures and albums but the frenzied crowd soon prohibited even that. When the limo finally made it to the store the owner greeted him at the car and begged him to leave while he still had a store left.

Amongst all the glitter and glamour Wendel still remains a very humble and sincere man though a simple walk to the store involves stopping to say hello and speak to one of his many fans. Wendel is still expanding his talent and has recently started singing live so next time you see the name Wanda Kentucky Jackson treat yourself to an enjoyable evening and catch a rising star. You may see Prince, Diana Ross, Patti Labelle, Tina Turner, Sade, Whitney Houston or just plain Wanda, whatever the evening calls for. I personally guarantee that Wendel's show is a winning ticket. Keep your ears and eyes open Portland, because cream always rises to the top. It's 1986 and Wendel is one who's definitely in the mix.

### THE MUSICAL TECHNICIANS Hot Ten Albums

#### Technical Trivia

- Q. What was Prince Rogers Nelson's first top ten hit?
1. Cashflow ..... Cashflow/Polygram
  2. Control ..... Janet Jackson/A&M
  3. Do Me Baby ..... Melisa Morgan/Capitol
  4. Sands of Time ..... S.O.S. Band/Tabu
  5. Parade ..... Prince/Warner Bros.
  6. Rapture ..... Anita Baker/Elektra
  7. The Source ..... Grand Master Flash/Elektra
  8. High Priority ..... Cherrelle/Tabu
  9. Precious Moments ..... Jermaine Jackson/Arista
  10. Shirley Murdok ..... Shirley Murdok/Elektra

## Sound and Beauty at IFCC

by Bob Lothian

The Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center scores again with "Sound and Beauty," two one-act plays that transport the audience to the mysterious Orient.

Both plays, "The House of Sleeping Beauties," and "The Sound of a Voice," by Chinese-American playwright David Henry Hwang, are set in Japan and each has only a man and a woman as characters.

The plays probe the psychic depths in relations between men and women. The characters' struggle to know is complicated by mysterious fate, ever present, never ceasing, like the ocean waves one character keeps alluding to.

In "The House of Sleeping Beauties," an aging writer visits a brothel frequented by old men who pay to sleep next to beautiful naked virgins.

Customers must be gentlemen, the madam tells him, and must not molest her girls.

The old man asks a lot of questions. He wants to find out what attracts other old men back again and again so he can write a story about it.

But he must confront the madam, who guards the mystery. Their interchange forms the drama, a drama which causes them both to see their lives in a new light.

"I have grown in this house," he says, before committing suicide.

"The Sound of a Voice" is a folk tale about a wandering Samurai warrior and a beautiful woman who lives alone in the forest. The locals think the woman is a witch because of her solitary life, and the warrior has come to kill her.

But he is attracted to her against his will. They fall in love for a brief time, but the warrior can't escape his role. He fails to understand, and is threatened by, her quiet, artistic life.

In a beautiful scene, she dances alone late at night in a garden bathed in pink light. He peeks at her, and sees but doesn't understand her mystery, which is perhaps the mystery of her being female.

Traditional music, costumes, sets and lighting, complete the feeling of being transported to the Orient, if only for a few hours.

Costumes and sets by Carey Wong stand out especially. They include a gilt kimono with a flashing peacock, and an authentic painted ceramic fire pot and cast iron pot hanger.

"The House of Sleeping Beauties" stars Seattle actors Henry Fujita as the writer and Nikki Louis as the madam. In "The Sound of a Voice," dancer Vincent Martinez plays the warrior, and June Yoshiko Tanoue the woman of the woods.

Word of the Week: Egocentric — Self centered  
Color of the Week: Tangerine Orange

### ABOUT TOWN

The Eldorado Club, 5016 NE Union, 284-8654, Fri-Sat, The Dennis Springer Quartet. Sun.-Mon., The Janis Scroggins Quartet.  
The Last Hurrah, 555 SW Alder, 224-1336, Fri-Sat. Cool'R  
Key Largo, 31 NW 1st, 223-9199, Wed. Jahbralter (reggae & fund from New York)  
Bee Gees, 5700 NE Union, 281-1176, Sat., Robby Robinson  
Remos, 1425 NW Glisan, 221-1150, Sun. Ron Steen Trio

In Concert: Sat. May 2nd, Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers, Jefferson Performing Arts Center, 5210 N. Kerby.

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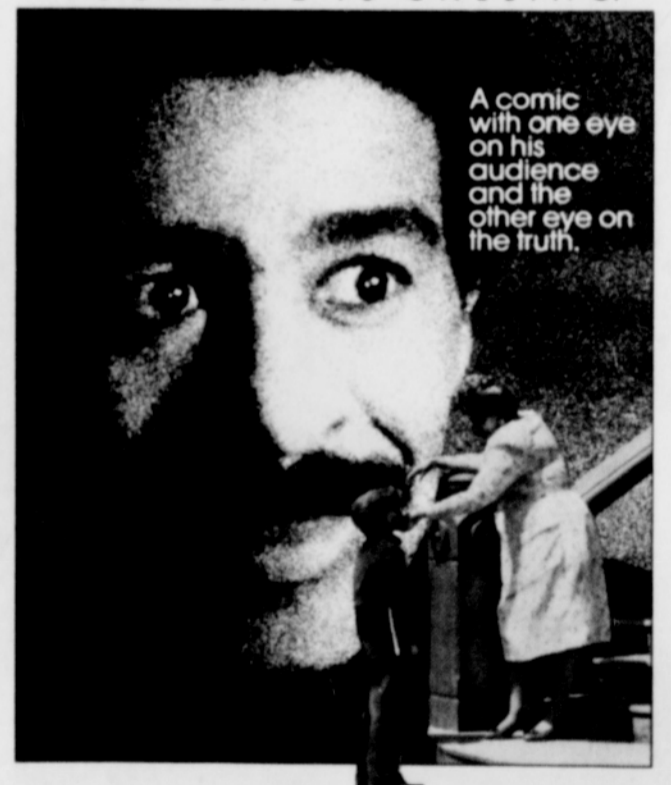


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