

METRO *Life*

LIFE IN THE PORTLAND METROPOLITAN AREA

The Portland Observer

Community Calendar

TUESDAY, JANUARY 11
1994 Martin Luther King, Jr., Celebration
 Race Issues Affecting the Oregon Justice System.
 Portland attorneys Angel Lopez and Jeffrey Millner. Sponsored by the UO Law School. 7:00 P.M. 129 UO Law Center.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12
Campus Cultural Wars.
 Sponsored by the UO Law School 7:00 P.M. 129 Law Center

THURSDAY, JANUARY 13
Commemorative Concert.
 Performance by members of the UO Gospel Ensemble.
 To Commemorate Martin Luther King, Jr. 1:00 P.M. Beall Concert Hall, Race and Reporting 5:30 P.M., Allen Hall.
 Civil Rights History of the South: Similarities and Contrasts with Oregon's. 7:00 P.M., Walnut Room, Erb Memorial Union.
 Sponsored by the UO Law School.

FRIDAY JANUARY 14, 1994
American Red Cross
 The Fifth Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blood Drive
 Maranatha Church
 4222 Northeast 12th Avenue, Portland, Oregon
 3 P.M. to 7 P.M.

MONDAY JAN. 17,
The Skanner's Eighth Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Prayer Breakfast
 Portland Conference Center, 1020NE Third Ave.
 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 A.M.

"Lou Rawls Parade Of Stars" Telethon

Many of the nation's best-known performers and celebrities will join Lou Rawls on Jan. 8 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF). This premier television special will be broadcast nationally to generate fund for UNCF's 41 private, historically Black colleges and universities.

The telecast -- slated to air from 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. (check local listings) -- will feature some of the biggest names in show business, while giving viewers an inside look at the academic programs and student successes at UNCF campuses across the country.

Ensuring a college education for Black students in the early 1940s was the impetus behind the formation of the United Negro College Fund. That's when Dr. Frederick D. Patterson, a veterinarian and president of Tuskegee Institute, issued a call to action to his fellow leaders at several small Black colleges in the south. Dr. Patterson believed that a united effort to pool resources was the best approach to provide funding for the colleges.



"Jade"



William H. Gray III, Lou Rawls, and Wayman F. Smith III

Continued to page 9

Through the Storm: Yolanda Adams



Yolanda Adams

"Make a joyful noise..." Joyful is defined as a feeling causing or indicating a condition of great pleasure or happiness. That is exactly what Yolanda Adams does when singing her praises unto the Lord; soulful, heart stirring renditions of love.

The world has definitely begun to take notice of the tremendous talents of Yolanda

Adams. Her latest album, "Through the Storm" on Tribute Records was released in August 1991, it has rendered her a 1992 Stellar Award in the category "Best Female Contemporary Gospel Artist." The single "Through the Storm" has also received high acclaim; it received a Dove Award for "Traditional Song of the Year." Both awards prove the versatility of this exciting Gospel artist; "Through the Storm" has both contemporary and traditional Gospel styles. The musical influences on this album range from jazz to hip-hop. "I also tried my hand at rapping," says Yolanda, "You have to reach the people where they are. If the young people are listening to jazz, then I'll give them that smooth jazz feel with the message of the Gospel woven in."

A Houston, Texas native, Yolanda began singing with her church choir when she was only four years old. She sang her first solo "All of My Help Comes From The Lord" at the tender age of eight. By the time she was Thirteen, Yolanda was singing professionally and touring with the Southeast Inspirational Choir. In 1986, she joined the Sound of Gospel Record Company family and recorded her first solo album entitled "Just As I Am."

This successful album remained on the Billboard chart for two consecutive years and in Billboard's top Ten for eight consecutive months.

"Through the Storm", Yolanda's second solo album was co-produced with Gospel Jazz artist, Ben Tankard. Tankard is Vice President of the Tribute label, a Christian owned and operated company, where he is also an artist. An accomplished songwriter, Yolanda co-wrote or arranged many of the songs on Through the Storm.

As a lyricist, the messages Yolanda delivers in her songs are not only heart felt, but developed through lifetime experiences. "I was in Florida the morning before a concert and was thinking about relationships and all of the time and energy we put into them. I started to reflect on how we put earthly people before the Lord and how our world revolves around that person. "A Message to You" is about how we have to keep our relationship to Him in perspective. We can't love someone else unselfishly unless we love Him totally."

The music for "My Everything" was given to Yolanda by Tankard. "After listening to the music I thought of what I wanted to tell the Lord, how much I appreciate Him,

how I thank Him, how He's changed my life," stated Yolanda, "that time the music came first, then the message."

In addition to original songs, Yolanda adds a new twist to some old favorites. One of her most popular arrangements, "Even Me" from this album is highly requested in concert performances. "I would sing a lot of hymns while visiting churches, but never sing them the way they were written. Generally after my performance, people would come up to me and say that they gained new insight or revelation from my interpretation of the song," emotes Yolanda.

Other outstanding works on "Through the Storm" include "Just A Prayer Away" written by Gregory Curtis; a message Yolanda says "comes directly from the Lord, He voices his sentiment of His Heart". Also, "The Only Way" which was written by Mervyn Warren, formally of Take Six, and Fred Vaughn; "this is our hip song" says Yolanda while also being musically acrobatic; and "You Know That I Know", was written for the young people. "It's a fun song, I got a chance to try my hand at rapping and deliver the mes-

Continued to page 9

Something On The Inside: Vanessa Bell Armstrong

When the maven of gospel, Vanessa Bell Armstrong, sings "Something On The Inside" on the title track of her latest Jive Records release, she's not just singing about God; she's singing about a Godly lifestyle, "Whatever you have on the inside should portray what you live, whatever you think and how you feel," Vanessa says.

While Vanessa enjoys creating the contemporary music that has helped broaden her audience among youth, she's also pleased that her new album contains a good amount of traditional gospel: the type of gospel that she grew-up listening to and that launched her professional career. But Vanessa is quick to point-out that "All musical styles -- jazz, blues, R&B, rock -- the mother and father of them all is God. Music is music, but it's the message that you put in it that makes it gospel. The message has got to be clear, uplifting and telling people about Jesus because He's the good news."

The selections on Vanessa's new album are indeed some of her most outspoken declarations of faith. Half of the eight song collection was produced by the late Thomas Whitfield, the acclaimed gospel composer who passed away suddenly last summer of a heart attack mid-way through the album's completion. Whitfield produced Vanessa's 1984 debut album, Peace Be Still. This was

the first time they'd worked together on one of these albums in some years, so it was a special reunion. She says, "It was like old times. It was memories." Vanessa insists no other producer knew her musical senses the way Whitfield did, and no other person ever made her feel more comfortable in the studio than he.

Among the Whitfield contribution is the stylish soul balladry of "Thank Ya," the nouveau jazz styled "You Can't Take My Faith Away," the bouncy mid-tempo "Father, I Stretch" and the album finale "Story of Calvary," a gut wrenching ballad that almost literally finds Vanessa singing her heart out. While recording "Story of Calvary" Vanessa said, "Tommy sat in the studio and cried while I cried. It was so real, the song just ministered. You could feel the spirit of the Lord and it was overflowing. All I had to do was flow with it." The dramatic song tells of Christ's crucifixion and foretells the Judgement Day.

Vanessa characteristically wails, "When I see him I might not be able to do nothing but CRY and CRRRY and CRRRRYYYYY/But when I see him I know you'll be there to wipe the tears from my eyes!"

"That's a powerful song," Vanessa says, pondering its message. "I'm moaning and groaning in that song, which I do a lot because I'm a very sensitive person. I have moods



Vanessa Bell Armstrong

where I just sit and think. Not just about my problems, but other people's too. When I start to feel the weight of other people, their problems and my own, I try to think about how Jesus died for our sins. That's what that song talks about. I can't forget why I am here -- Christ died so I might be free!"

While the album is certain to touch Vanessa's old fans and attract new ones, it has had an equally profound affect on her. "I've been listening to this album my self," she

remarks, "and it's given me the strength to want to be an extension of what Tommy has fathered with these songs. He is still alive in this music."

While the current trend is for artists to compose their own songs, Vanessa explains why she prefers to record the work of others. "It's easy to portray what you write, but it's more a challenge when you can feel what another writer is trying to get across." She accomplishes this on 18-year-old producer Vincent Herbert's funky "Everlasting Love" and his smooth "Don't You Give Up." The latter was written in memory of his late mother, who was also a gospel singer. "I brought that song around to my interpretation because, while I have not lost a loved one, I've gone through different periods in my life that were challenging. This song is to encourage and tell others not to give up, no matter what happens. Keep holding on to God."

Carvin Winans handled production on "Ounce of Your Love," which Vanessa says, "...has taken me to another realm;" Vanessa duets with the husky voiced Rev. John P. Kee of New Life Community Choir fame. This upbeat jam for Jesus finds them vocally matching each other note for note, as Vanessa emotes that this "...something' affects every

single thing you do, the way you walk, the way you talk, the way you sing, it shows the base of the message you bring."

A native of Detroit, Vanessa grew up on the gospel of Mahalia Jackson and the soul of Aretha Franklin. Those influences were apparent on her earliest traditional styled gospel numbers like "I'm Going Through," "God My God" and "There's a Brighter Day." In fact, the lifting, almost blues-like arrangements coupled with Vanessa's astonishing vocal energy and improvisational skills had critics hailing her the Mahalia Jackson and the new Queen of Gospel.

It's little surprise that when the producers of the NBC sitcom "Amen" wanted a power-house singer (they considered Patti LaBelle and Aretha Franklin) to record the show's theme in the mid-'80s, they chose Vanessa. Later, she was a smash on Broadway in the gospel musical "Don't Get God Started," which toured nationally for three years.

Vanessa's singles "You Bring Out the Best in Me," "Pressing On" and "Something Inside So Strong" earned strong airplay on gospel radio while broadening her audience to include more youth. Following these triumphs, Vanessa appeared in the telefilm "The