

ENTERTAINMENT TRIP AROUND THE WORLD

DICK MCINNES

Imagine if you can, the Grand Hotel after 40 years. The GARBOS are gone, the BARRYMOORES are gone, the CRAWFORDS are gone and in their places are three hookers, a sad old man, a lonely old woman, a misfit brother and sister, all losers. Even the hotel is a loser now. It's about to be torn down and the antique dealer vultures are circling around to pick at the bones of the once famous hotel. That's LANFORD WILSON's comedy hit "The Hotel Baltimore" which has moved into the Mark Taper Forum until September 16 . . . It is called a comedy and I really did laugh a lot but I felt like crying a lot, too. Wilson does such numbers on you during the course of the play that you're not really sure where you are. He's a brilliant playwright. His cast just happens to be perfect which doesn't hurt. JENNIFER SALT is terrific as the youngest of the hookers who is interested in practically everything and who thinks that anyone who doesn't believe in anything is just plain chicken. JA'NET DU BOIS is funny, hard and warm in just the right doses and BARBARA COLBY as the third hooker is so right on that she gets a hand just by walking across the stage. But such a walk! PETER BROCCO and IRENE TEDROW score well as the two older folks and MARGARET LINN and CHIP ZIEN make the two oddballs quite believable. TED LEPLAT is good as a young man looking for

something to care about and very fine support comes from PEARL SHEAR, ALAN OPPENHEIMER and CHRISTOPHER LLOYD. The sleazy set by ARCHIE SHARP is extra sharp and the NEIL TAYLOR costumes are super. "The Hotel Baltimore" is a nice place to visit but I sure as hell wouldn't want to live there. A nice touch was added when the after party was held at the Hotel Biltmore which has just received a new face as opposed to being torn down.

Among those sipping champagne were ZINA BETHUNE, JOAN VAN ARK and NBC newsmen JOHN MARSHALL, BARRA GRANT, ALLYN ANN McLERIE (hubby GEORGE GAYNES joined her after his "Gigi" chores), PATTI REGAN, DOROTHY McGUIRE, ROCK HUDSON, NANCY WALKER and EDY WILLIAMS.

BELAFONTE THE BEAUTIFUL is at the Universal Amphitheatre and knocking them dead. Not only is he beautiful to look at (still looks the same as he did 20 years ago) and beautiful to listen to but if by any chance he's anything like his on-stage personality, he's a beautiful person, too. He certainly is not adverse to letting fellow performers do their thing. LETTA MBULU whether singing Nigerian folk songs or the "Theme from Romeo and Juliet" is every inch the perfect songstress, FALUMI PRINCE shakes her shaker like no one can and was a riot in the waterbucket song with HARRY and SIVUCA on guitar and accordion more than held his own with the dynamic Belafonte in their duets. However, it's still Belafonte who is the superstar and with good reason, he's one of the very best performers around and in this outing, he becomes one of the loosest. The old Belafonte was kind of distant on stage but this new one is delightful. He sang some new songs, sang the old ones and when he left the stage, the lights came up and the audience literally screamed him back out. A genuine standing ovation and you know

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 10, 1973

something, he genuinely deserved it. Looks like crime does pay for WARREN OATES. After making a smash hit in AIP's "Dillinger", he's now being paged by producer-director LEONARD HORN to continue his life of crime in "Necessary Evil". Evil is about the death of Caryl Chessman. With "Dillinger" and "Tom Sawyer" (how's that for a parlay?) OATES is just about the hottest actor around and Horn definitely knows a necessary good when he sees it.

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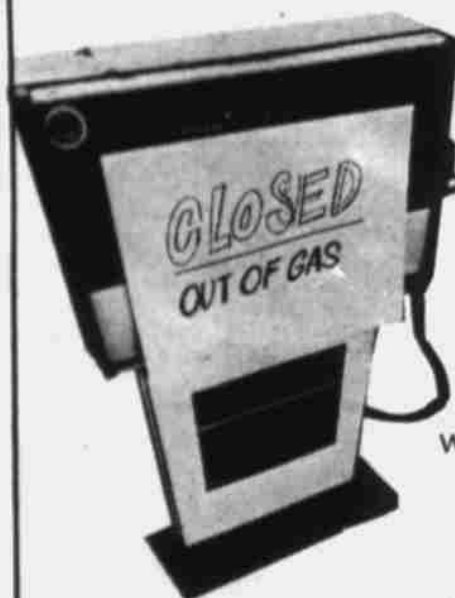
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