

Between Scenes Break

ENTERTAINMENT ★★ ★

★★★★★ Hues & Cries



WALTER BURRELL

Hollywood Happenings

To be a real blues artist takes a certain set of ingredients found in a select few people -- most of them, in the end, being found in "soul brothers" and "soul sisters."

A classic example of the true blues stylist is singer Mae Mercer and all one has to do to find proof is view her performance in the soon-to-be-released movie, "A Time For Heroes," starring Claudia Cardinale and Rod Taylor.

Her renditions of "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home," "Your Red Wagon" and "Nobody Loves You When You're Down And Out" in the film set in the 40's leaves little doubt that Mae is reaching down inside herself and pouring out pure "soul" when she closes her eyes and caresses a lyric.

Even the slightest glance at the singer's background reveals those almost down-the-line circumstances which have produced this country's purest and truly indigenous form of singing: Blues.

MISS MERCER was born 28 years ago in the South (Rocky Mount, North Carolina) of a Negro father and a Cherokee Indian mother. Her early "down home" Baptist training found her singing in the choir at the age of six. By the time she was nine she had formed her own gospel group and was singing in churches all over the state. It wasn't long before she toured nearly all of the key Southern cities.

She then ventured to New York, where she worked at the Page Three club and at Trudy Heller's famed niter. She even performed for Governor Rockefeller.

In '62, Mae flew to Paris for a six-month engagement at the Caroll Club and was so smitten with the romantic city that she went into partnership with the owner of the Grande Severine Club, the most popular night spot on Paris' Left Bank. Together, they formed The Blues Bar, a business which proved to be so successful that Mae remained with it for three years.

During that time she was accompanied by such top name musicians as Sonny Criss, Johnny Griffin, Art Taylor and others. However, in '65 she got the itch to move on again and traveled to North Africa for various cultural organizations and to Israel, where she was held over for two months on an initial three-week contract.

Following this, she toured Germany as female vocalist with "Sonny Boy" Williams, Lightening Hawkins and Howling Wolf on the American Folk-Blues Tour.

BUT FIVE years in Europe, no matter how successful, left Mae homesick for America and she headed for Hollywood. With "A Time For Heroes" completed, she's already planning a trip to Mexico City, where she'll appear at that city's biggest club for three months. They wanted her for six months, but the singer insists she's put down roots in Cinema City (she recently bought a home in the Hollywood Hills) and wants to get back.

Not that she has left many faraway cities unvisited. In addition to Europe and North Africa, she appeared in Copenhagen, England, Spain and three times in Scotland. She's taken the blues to nearly every corner of the earth. "I've found," notes Mae, "that foreigners, especially Europeans, appreciate the blues far more than Americans might expect. They're quick to identify with the plaintive earthiness and raw emotionalism that the blues swells out of. I know I'll go back, but for shorter visits this time."

And those are pretty good prospects for a former country girl from North Carolina.



TIME OUT -- Blues singer Mae Mercer and actor William Marshall take time between scenes for "A Time For Heroes" to discuss their roles in the post World War II film.

POPULAR AGENT OPENS OWN BOOKING OFFICE

Dick Boone, one of the best known bookers in the rhythm & blues field, announced his resignation from the Shaw Agency, and has opened his own office at 200 West 57 Street, N.Y.C.

Dick Boone started his career as the road manager of Tiny Bradshaw, in the hay-day of the big band surge. He started his booking career with the Gale Agency, where he spent 5 years. The agency was founded by Moe Gale, and reached prominence through the talents of artists like the late Chick Webb, Ella Fitzgerald, the Ink Spots and Cootie Williams, among other greats. Leaving Gale, he spent 9 years with Universal Attractions, which was founded by Ben Bart, who now shares a business with James Brown.

Dick spent the last 11 years on the payroll of the Shaw Agency, which was founded by the late Billy Shaw, and became famous on the notes of the rhythm & blues craze. At one time, the Shaw Agency handled more rhythm & blues artists than any other agency in the country.

Now under his own banner, Dick Boone Agency, Inc., Dick will continue to work with the modern contingent of "soul artists," who are blazing a new theatrical trail. Nick Zale has come on as his associate. Together, they will make a major move in April to fully staff the new agency. They anticipate a roster of important attractions. Under contract at present is Junior Parker and his Orchestra. However, the new agency has the right to submit other well-known acts. Among them are the Famous Drifters, Redd Foxx, Wild Bill Davis and Bill Doggett.

Gardening Tools? Who Needs 'Em? MTA

MATT KELLY BULLETIN

On Saturday, January 20, 1968, at 6:30 p.m., Adult members of Matt Kelly cub pack 134 attended the Annual Scouts' Recognition Dinner for Boulder Dam Council. The dinner was held in the rotunda of the Convention Center with approximately 3,500 people in attendance.

Mrs. Lonnie Marshall was chairlady for pack 134. Those attending from cub pack 134 were: Mr. and Mrs. John Walker, Mr. and Mrs. Kermit Booker, Mr. and Mrs. Steve Schiebel, Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Bailey, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall, Mr. and Mrs. Ellison, Mrs. Joyce Hutchins, Miss Lillian Beamon, Mr. Ben Canada, Mrs. Lucille Bryant, Mrs. Ethel Johnson and Mrs. Edith Atkinson.

Mrs. Kermit R. Booker, Sr., wife of Kermit R. Booker, Sr. (deceased), holder of the Silver Beaver Award, was guest of pack 134.

CHICAGO - (NPI)--Aretha Franklin rode a swelling crest of popularity as a singer and recording artist in 1967 to emerge as the year's top female vocalist, according to major entertainment industry publications. She was voted tops by Cash Box, Billboard, and Record World magazines and newspapers, and climaxed her year's achievements by winning the Rhythm and Blues Artist of the Year award at the Gavin Radio Programing convention, Las Vegas, in mid-December.

NEW YORK - (NPI)--Duke Ellington's creative genius and versatility as a composer found ample expression in a huge welcome from 7,500 persons who gathered at the huge Episcopal Cathedral Church of St. John on Manhattan to hear his second concert of sacred music. Titled "Lord's Messenger Boy," the concert featured Duke's famed "A-Train" orchestra with two choirs, soloists and dancers in the presence of his distinguished host, Episcopal Bishop Horace W. B. Donegan.

LOS ANGELES - (NPI)--Pianist Phineas Newborn proved recently that his name is still magic with local jazz buffs, as he captivates audiences at the Embers with his keyboard wizardry and was installed on a regular basis after a trial engagement. Newborn has been sidelined by illness and had been heard only occasionally on records.

ATTRACTIVE PROGRAM

CHICAGO - (NPI)--Many of the nation's top poets, writers and historians will be brought together at Dunbar High School on Feb. 4, when the Museum of African American History sponsors "An Afternoon With Langston Hughes," to spotlight Negro history. Among those slated to attend are dramatist Edith Wilson, a long-time friend and associate of the late poet Hughes; Gwendolyn Brooks, famous Guggenheim award-winning poet, and Illinois poet-laureate; and Margaret Walker, author of the best selling civil war novel, "Jubilee."

PORTLAND, Ore. - (NPI)--When the 29th annual convention of the NAACP last year crowned Miss Rebecca N. Mendes of New Bedford, Mass., as queen of its New England Conference, the internationally famous Gillette Safety Razor company took special note of the development and followed up by awarding Miss Mendes with a symbolic trophy. Miss Mendes and her court are featured in the current issue of "Caravan," an industrial quarterly published in behalf of several leading industries, including Gillette.

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Begin Registration For Community Skills Bank

The Manpower Development Center announces the establishing of its Community Skills Bank. This service will be offered in addition to the regular placement services, provided for persons seeking training and/or employment.

The Skills Bank will provide a central file on persons who have technical, or professional skills, who are seeking new employment within their vocations. It will also allow persons who are presently under-employed to register their skills for potential employment. Registration will begin on February 5, 1968, at the Manpower Development Center, 940-A West Owens (Golden West Shopping Center), in Las Vegas, Nevada.

This service is being co-ordinated with the local NAACP and various representatives involved with increasing the employment opportunities of qualified minorities.

For further information contact the Manpower Development Center, 642-9737.