

ENTERTAINMENT

SPOTLIGHTING THE STARS

by Bill Lane

When book publishers come out with their first printings of books they think promise to become best-sellers they usually use caution by making the first printing only a few hundred thousand copies. If the book takes off, they can always hurry additional printings. But in the recording business hopes springs ever eternal. Companies recording many of the top-selling and most famous pop and rock artists are now forced to sell millions of "over-printed" albums for less than one-third their original prices—sometimes less than what it cost to print the albums. All because their original orders were too optimistic. If Kiss, Chic, The Brothers Johnson, Neil Diamond and Linda Ronstadt sold a million copies the last time out, why not print two million copies of their newest albums right off the bat? That's the way the reasoning went. Now the companies are being shocked as their distributors from all over the country report they still are stuck with over-shipments of albums that did not sell "just like before." Even Teddy Pendergrass' latest recording is listed in those "overkill" statistics.

And we hear that one of the largest record companies is set to move its top black executive to a "community realtions" post, but still under a VP title.

Diana Ross opened a dazzling return to Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, her big show set to remain at the desert spa through October 10. Almost a full-month's stand. And also right at the time news is emerging that the famous-singer actress has become the center of a seeming tug-of-war among factors seeking to film the life story of the late Parisian chanteuse, Josephine Baker.

Allan Carr, the promotional genius behind "Saturday Night Fever," had announced that in 1982 he'd come out with the Baker film starring Diana Ross, his version based on a book by Miss Baker's widower, Jo Bouillon. But Motown board chairman Berry Gordy is reported to have grabbed the option on Steve Papich's own book, "Remembering JOsephine," about La Baker, to film it with Diana as star. And to add further interest, and possible confusion, producer Ed Shaw, who once said he'd film the Papich version, says he's now all set to produce a CBS-TV motion picture about Josephine Baker based on a book written by Leo Guild.

At this rate maybe Diana Ross, Diahann Carroll and Shirley Bassey will all get a chance to play Josephine Baker. Or, as says one jokester, "somebody else can write still another Josephine Baker story and cast Sin Lady Java as the star."

In Las Vegas there is one show getting all kinds of attention and praises. It's called "Ipi-Tombi," and is a kinetic and thrilling panorama of authentic African songs and dances and featuring an African cast of 30 performers. It opened at Major Riddle's Silvebird for two weeks, and because of its exploded popularity has been held over indefinitely. "Ipi-Tombi" has already played to approving audiences in Australia, Africa, Europe and New York. Sammy Davis, Jr., calls the show "the best thing in Las Vegas."

Peaches & Herb are still talking about the vast difference between audiences in the United States and those in Mainland China. The popular R&B duo was in China recently with the Bob Hope show troupe, which also featured singer Crystal Gayle. Peaches said "Audiences in our country are always enthusiastic. They scream, yell out praises, clap their



DIANA ROSS

hands and stomp their feet while you're doing your act, but in China they just sit there cold, disciplined and antiseptic all during your performance. But they applaud in the end."

Calvin Lockhart in Hollywood for the showing of his new movie filmed in Italy and Africa. The showing is for prospective distributors. The movie, called "Contact," is a sizzler, laugh-evoking with its tricky but entertaining plot and totally eyeopening with its bold, up-front nudity...Matt "Stymie" Beard taped feature roles in "The Jeffersons" and Melvin Van Peebles' "Sophisticated Gents"...James Brown added to the growing cast of "The Blues Brothers," starring John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin and Cab Calloway, now filming at Universal. Some scenes are being shot in Chicgo.

Teddy Pendergrass, Phyllis Hyman and Lou Gossett headed for D.C. to head up the big 1st Annual VIP Reception of the Congressional Black Caucus....Thank you, Wally "Famous" Amos for that

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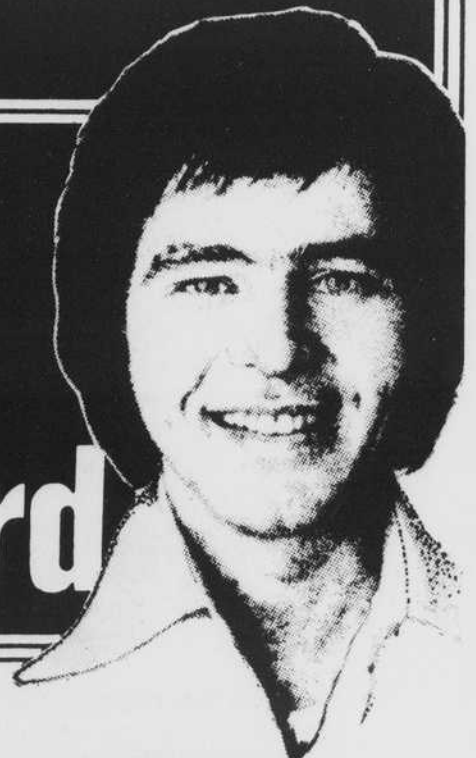


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