

# entertainment scene

by Ron Trice

## "Stay Free," Ashford and Simpson

Fresh from their stunning success of writing and producing Diana Ross's smash lp "The Boss," Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson have now focused on their own musical pursuits, with the release of their latest album "Stay Free."

Long noted for their well written and beautifully arranged love songs, the duo now take to the dance floor with an album filled with dance tunes that are thoroughly engrossing.

"Stay Free," is a free-flowing and refreshing cut above the rest of some of today's mechanically produced music, that all sound monotonously the same. As with any Ashford and Simpson production the standard of quality is high and the writing is soulfully slick and sophisticated.

The prevailing theme of this album is dance, and this theme is most prevalent on the song "Dance Fever." Throughout most of the tunes this vigorous dance force is felt, as well as on their current hit "Found A Cure" and "Stay Free."

## "Midnight Magic," The Commodores

As one of the top soul groups today, The Commodores' recording material is increasingly becoming routine. Having developed a highly stylized sound the group has managed to maintain a name for themselves.

Their new album "Midnight Magic," suffers from a sluggish sameness that is resounded on most of the album's material.

The Commodores are a group that seem to keep the same musical momentum, with little variation or diversion from their standard pattern of recording. Their R&B tunes as well as their ballads come across as bland and uninspired.

The album is well produced and does have a good sound; but so do their radio commercials, and who wants to buy commercials.

## "Risqué," Chic

Classy, elegant, and stylish are all words that encompass the sound of Chic. This well-defined disco group has had hit after hit since their emergence on the music scene in late 1977. Chic's latest effort "Risqué," is a collection of smooth rhythmic well-tempered tunes that all have that definite Chic touch.

Loaded with top-notch disco tunes like "Good Times" and "My Feet Keep Dancing," this equally balanced musical package includes some very fine ballads as well. The best of which is "A Warm Summer Night," a breezy romantic tune that evokes the sensuous effects of a warm summer night set to music.

By far one of Chic's best albums, this musical accomplishment solidifies this classy conglomerate as one of the premier disco groups.



Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson.

## Suit hits Sears: discrimination

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) filed nationwide lawsuits against Sears, Roebuck and Co. charging the world's largest retailer with patterns of employment discrimination based on sex, race, and national origin.

Five suits were filed in five different cities. The actions were brought under Title VII of the civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and the Equal Pay Act of 1963.

On suit, which was filed in U.S. District Court in Chicago where Sears is headquartered, alleges employment discrimination against women at Sears facilities throughout the U.S. The complaint includes claims that the company has denied equal opportunity to women by paying them less than it pays men for performing the same or similar jobs.

It further alleges sexually discriminatory recruiting, hiring, training and promotion practices.

The other four suits against Sears establishments allege discrimination against minorities in hiring. Affected were two major stores in New York City, one large store in Montgomery, Ala., a Catalog Merchandise Distribution Center (CMDC) in Memphis, Tenn., and two major stores and a CMDC in Atlanta, Ga.

Sears employs over 400,000 people and has facilities in all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

## Police harass Chicago Mexicans

Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Chicago-area residents of Mexican origin are the victims of racially motivated questioning, searches and arrests by suburban police officers each year, according to a recent issue of *The Chicago Reporter*.

These practices occur despite federal guidelines which prohibit local police departments from questioning, detaining, arresting or placing an "immigration hold" on "any persons not suspected of a crime, solely on the grounds they may be deportable aliens."

Reporter Alfredo S. Lanier found many of these illegal police tactics continue in Chicago suburbs, however. Incidents are reported both in suburbs with large Mexican populations—Melrose Park, Summit and Blue Island—as well as some with few Mexican residents but with many Mexican workers, such as Skokie and Franklin Park.

The victims are both legal and illegal immigrants as well as U.S. citizens. The abuses include:

- Arrests and questioning of people for minor violations to check their immigration status
- Arrests of all passengers in a car whose driver has committed a traffic violation
- Racist and abusive remarks by arresting police officers
- Ineffective efforts by the Chicago district office of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to ensure local police departments abide by federal guidelines.
- Refusal of suburban police departments to investigate crimes committed against illegal immigrants.

U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) records show suburban police departments arrest about 100 Mexicans a month on immigration violations. However, INS makes no effort to determine how many of these arrests comply with federal guidelines.

An attorney with the Legal Services Center for Immigrants, 1661 Blue Island Ave., reports that his office receives five to 10 complaints a week from suburban Mexican residents charging police harassment over immigration matters.

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## Black 'frame-up' in Mississippi

Attacks on the African-American freedom movement in the South have intensified with the recent frame-up of Ernie McMillan, Delta Region Field

Coordinator for the United League of Mississippi. McMillan, a veteran civil rights activist, is facing a maximum prison sentence of 15 years on charges stemming from a robbery.

The United League has come to national attention in the past year through its grassroots organizing and mass demonstrations, chiefly in Tupelo and Okolona, Mississippi. Faced with opposition from the Ku Klux Klan, the League has held a series of demonstrations protesting police brutality and demanding hiring of more Afro-Americans in government and stores.

In Sunflower County, Mississippi, the United League has been active since February, 1979, demanding justice in the case of James Jackson. Jackson, a young man, had been killed by policeman Sam Cross. Through consistent mass pressure, Cross was finally brought to trial in June and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The United League has also mounted an 85 percent effective boycott of white merchants in protest of the so-called jail "suicide" of Frank Brock in Drew, Mississippi in April, 1979.

The local power structure has met this mass protest with harassment and minor arrests of United League members, culminating in the charges against McMillan. These were based on a complaint by a person who said that \$280.00 was taken by a "large Blackman" who got into a car (later described as McMillan's). In the words of United League President Skip Robinson, "The basis of this charge is racial and political. It is an effort to hinder or destroy the unifying effect of the United League."

McMillan, 34, joined SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) in 1963 and was active in Albany, Georgia, Selma, Alabama, and Holly Springs, Mississippi, and was a founder of Texas SNCC. He has served part of a 10 year prison sentence as a result of charges of "destroying property" during a supermarket boycott against high prices and selling of rotten food in the black community. Since his release from prison, McMillan had been active in prison reform work in Dallas, Texas, and since February, 1979 he has been organizing in Sunflower County, Mississippi. McMillan will be facing a grand jury in early October. Donations for support can be sent to: Sunflower County United League Defense Fund; P.O. Box 488; Morehead, Mississippi 3876.

## on the cover

In recognition of the Afro-American holiday observance of Kwanza—while at the same time remembering Christian, Islamic and Jewish faiths which also celebrate during this season—artist Al Hollingsworth painted this month's cover scene, Kwanza.

## on the inside

Kwanza, both the Afro-American holiday observance, and the spirit of that observance in the form of a group of Hollywood actresses who raise funds for the needy with an annual Kwanza party, are subjects of feature articles this month. A bonus treat is an article about Kwanza cover artist Alvin C. Hollingsworth, whose work is seen frequently on the covers of *National Scene*.