

ENTERTAINMENT

BEHIND THE SCENES

with Lisa Collins

Melba Moore is back doing what she loves best as she headlines a play titled "Simply Heavenly" at the Shubert Theater in Philadelphia. Industry insiders are still talking about the open letter Melba wrote in an insider trade "Sister 2 Sister". Dubbed Melba's declaration of independence, Melba tells of how she took back control of her own career from an organization in which her husband was at the helm. "I was the invisible woman. You would think," Melba wrote, "I didn't have sense enough to take off my rhinestones for a business meeting. So I said I know you think I don't have the brains of a dead dog, but you're wrong." If you'd like to read the letter in full, or want more information on Sister 2 Sister, write P. O. Box 41148, DC 20018, or call (202) 635-3879.

New Film For Controversial Filmmaker: Spike Lee began work on his next feature, "A Love Supreme" recently in New York. The film, which centers on the life of Lee's father, features Denzel Washington in the title role. . . . Lee, incidentally, gets nothing but praise from veteran actress Ruby Dee. Said Dee, "my role model is Spike Lee. I like what he's doing. He's shown me something that I hope is possible in my own lifetime. To believe in something so much that you just pick up and do it somehow". Dee, along with her husband Ossie Davis, was featured in Lee's latest film, "Do The Right Thing". Ironically enough, some of the scenes with Davis are reminiscent of their real-life first meeting some 44 years ago when they were cast in a play together, and she didn't like him at all. Recalled Dee, "I remember I was understudying the lead and the guy that was understudying him -- we'd sit out in the theater and just talk about him. It something, cause he was skinny and gangly and his arms looked like they hung down from the sleeves about 12 inches". But as fate would have it, three years later, they were married.

Top Names Turn Out For "A Dry, White Season": The Los Angeles premiere of "A Dry White Season, attracted some of Hollywood's biggest names including Lou Gossett, Robert Guillaume, Whoopi Goldberg, Danny Glover, Debbie Allen, Jasmine Guy, and Morgan Fairchild. Among those cast members present were Susan Sarandon, Zakes Mokae and Donald Sutherland, who commented on the question of why it is that blacks must share the spotlight with white actors in order to gain Hollywood acceptance. Said Sutherland, "I don't think you need to show black people films about repression. You need to show it to white people. It's just normal. . . natural that if they see it through the eyes of a white man it becomes more personal to them. No matter what I was real glad for the job, so if that's the truth I profited from it, and thank you very much".

It All Comes Out In The Wash: Suddenly Robin Givens isn't looking so much the bad girl what with the recent revelations about the out-of-ring boxing exploits of former hubby, "Iron Mike". Tyson, who called his former confidante and friend Jose Torres, a liar and betrayer, as he denied incidents and statements made by Torres in his tell-all book, "Fire & Fear", must have been more than surprised when Torres released audio tapes of Tyson documenting allegations that Tyson beat women and loved to inflict pain. **Short Takes:** Phyllis Strickney, star of the new ABC series "New Attitudes" got a standing ovation for the comedy routine she performed at the recent meeting of the Black Caucus. Strickney says she took up comedy a few years ago to pay the bills between acting stunts. . . . And Lou Gossett is one of many top name celebrities (including Christopher Reeves) who is touring with a musical revue entitled "Heart Strings". The show was designed to promote AIDS awareness and is part of an effort to raise \$4 million for AIDS agencies. **Next week:** Roger Mosley talks about his upcoming film project.



The Yellow Jackets are from left to right: Russell Ferrante, Jimmy Haslip, Marc Russo and William Kennedy

Smooth Jazz Yellow Jackets Perform At UNCC

SPECIAL TO THE POST
With their Jazz Fusion Album for Politics in 1989, the Yellowjackets have now one in two categories (their album Shades won for R&B Instrumental Performance in 1986). Their new ground breaking release, **The Spin** is a different twist of the Yellowjackets tale, and could pocket them a third Grammy for Jazz Instrumental Performance by a Group. True, "the Jackets" have been moving towards a more spontaneous "playing" style since 1987's **Four Corners**, but **The Spin** shows a more serious commitment than ever to jazz, without losing any of their strong melodic vision.

The group will perform at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. Friday at McKnight Hall on the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's campus.

"On **The Spin** we've gone to our traditional jazz inspirations, while still striving for the most melodic music we can make," said bassist Jimmy Haslip, "more acoustic and traditional than any other Yellowjackets

album. Keith Jarrett's trio is still playing the bop kind of thing, but treating it in a modern perspective. That's all we're trying to do, play jazz with modern harmony and technology. As a band we're trying to stretch out and give people that don't know or understand jazz a chance, while growing and challenging ourselves."

The concept of **The Spin** was in place when the group began writing for the album last year. "We wanted to have lots of space in the music, and a real warm sounding album," said keyboardist/composer Russell Ferrante. "Beautiful melodies, as much as we're capable of writing, and acoustic instruments."

Some of the warmest sounding records the Jackets could think of were done on the EMC Jazz label, specifically the work of engineer Jan Erik Kongshaug. Kongshaug was excited about the chance to work with the group, and he invited them to come record at his Rainbow Studios in Oslo, Norway. The band accepted, and after several months of

writing and rehearsing on the west coast (of California), they left for Oslo.

"Oslo was unique," said drummer Will Kennedy. "We went there and focused in on the project. The arrival was exciting, getting there and walking into the studio, realizing, 'What's life without a little risk?' We went for it, and we're happy we did."

"We allotted three weeks to do the whole thing," Haslip said. "So there wasn't a lot of time to mess around. It was putting the blinders on and jumping into it. We were there isolated making this record. . . . It was harder than I anticipated because of that isolation, and at the same time it forced us into coming up with something a little different, which we were trying to do."

Young American jazzers out on a limb, but confident of their new material, written with just such a setting in mind. "I always try to play what the situation calls for," said saxman Marc Russo. "So being in Norway, a million miles from home, it was

like, 'okay, we're making a jazz record, just approach it a little more relaxed and see what come out.' There was more room to play on this album."

Besides going for a more spacious, airy sound, the band wanted this record to be much more of a live performance. The resulting tracks capture each member at his best. "With four guys, every person has to really open up," Ferrante said. "In the early days we would do a track and then leave space to overdub. Now we approach it like, 'Let's make the four of us sound like a band. Let's try to get it so we don't need another element in the song to make it sound complete.' That inspires everyone to open up and try all the dynamics and colors we need just in the four of us."

Tickets for the concert are \$15.50 for students, \$17.50 for general advance and \$18.50 at the door.

Tickets can be purchased at the Cone Center, Camelot Records, on Independence and South Boulevard, all Shazada Records and New World Records.



Davis

Chuck Davis Dancers To Perform At Art Museum

After dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo for two weeks, a free family trip to Africa may be just the mental tonic needed for the house-bound or the yard-work weary.

With a little imagination and the help of co-sponsors International House, the Afro-American Cultural Center and the Mint Museum of Art, the museum lawn at 2730 Randolph Road will be converted on October 8 to the plains of Africa complete with the continent's sights, sounds and smells.

The Chuck Davis African American Dance Ensemble will perform at 2 and 4 p.m. (for the uninitiated, it's nearly impossible not to join in the exuberant performance of this engaging dance troupe). At 3 p.m., storyteller Brendalyn Jones of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library will enact African stories. "Inside and Outside the African Mask, a music and slide presentation, will be narrated at 3:30 p.m. in the Van Every Forum by Rob Williams, master instructor of fine arts at Charlotte Country Day School. Vendors from Caribbean Eatables and Casablanca restaurants will sell authentic African and Afro-

Caribbean foods.

There will be continuous hands-on activities such as mask-making, printmaking, scavenger hunts for African symbols and animals, and tours of the exhibition "African Art from the Rita and John Grunwald Collection." All activities and admission to the museum are free. To supplement on-site parking, a free shuttle bus will run continuously from 1-6 p.m. between the Afro-American Cultural Center and the Mint Museum.

The program is made possible in part by the Arts and Science Council of Charlotte and the Grassroots Arts Program of the North Carolina Arts Council.

"African Art from the Rita and John Grunwald Collection" features 70 objects from the major sculpture producing regions of Africa. The exhibition, organized by the Indiana University Art Museum, will be on display until November 12.

The Chuck Davis African American Dance Ensemble is supported by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the North Carolina Arts Council and the Southern Arts Federation.

By Winfred Cross

Post Entertainment Editor
While the real James Brown is serving a jail term in a South Carolina prison, Charlotte's own version of the same will be giving a tribute in his honor.

James Brown Henderson, or Westside James Brown as he is known by his friends, will headline the event along with the Great CoCo Mini Band at 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday at Northwest Middle School's auditorium.

Part of the proceeds from the show will be donated to the Uptown Day Shelter for the homeless. Brown said he's also doing the show to help support his friend.

"I met him back in 1965 when he was real hot. I was offered a job to work with him sometime but I never did," Henderson said. "It didn't feel comfortable at the time."

Henderson, who says he's 44, said he was not pleased with what's happened to Brown, but said some of it's his own fault.

"He let go. You can't let go out here. You gotta keep driving to be 'Soul Brother No. 1,' he said. "You've got to live that, think that, believe that."

Henderson's tribute to Brown will feature him doing some of Brown's hit songs as well as tunes by Sam Cooke. The show will open with a short play called "Help."

"It's about a singer who went bad. But somebody talks to him and sets him straight and he's able to sing again," Henderson said.

The show will also feature Marietta Westbrook and the Soul Revue. A fashion show featuring original creations by Lateefah will also be a part of the tribute.

Lateefah designs were featured in the "Mist Behavin Show," a national fashion show sponsored by Canadian Mist, when it toured Charlotte.

Henderson said this tribute is just part of things he's involved with. He has acted in the CBS TV miniseries "Chiefs" and the unreleased "Black Rainbow." He plans to join the Screen Actors Guild in January to insure more movie roles.

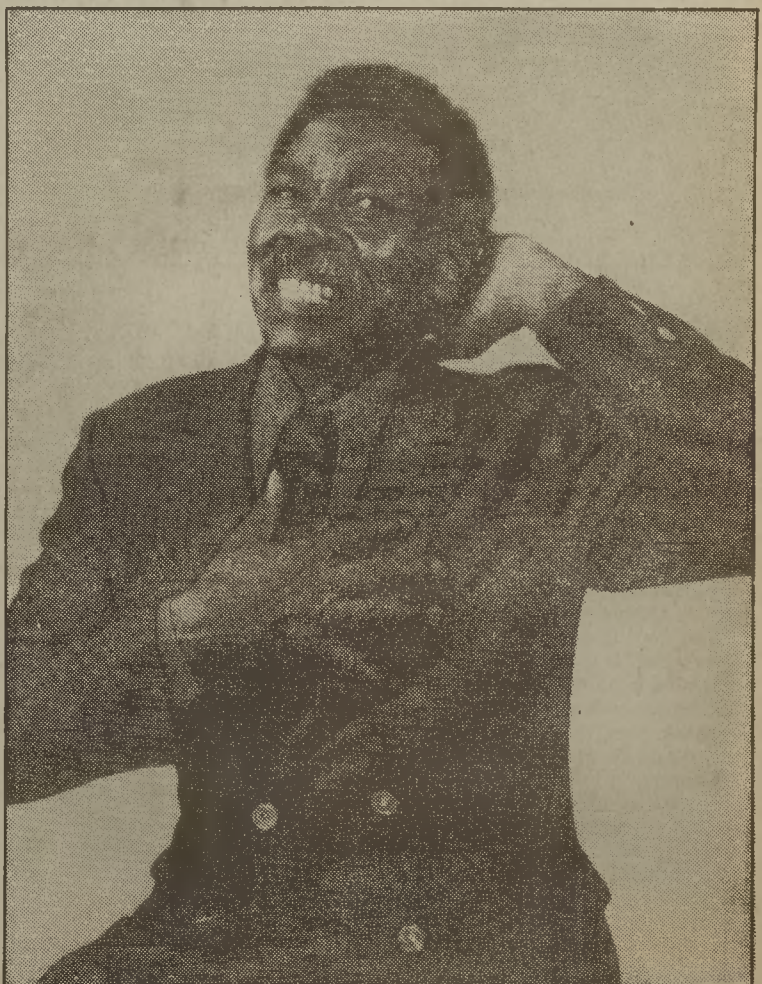
"He let go. You can't let go out there."

Westside James Brown

He's also writing some gospel songs for a group and plans to do some recording himself.

"Who knows," he said as he laughed, "we may have a Motown-like company in Charlotte."

Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$12 at the door. They can be purchased at Talley Town convenience store on LaSalle Street.



Brown

Photo: Calvin Ferguson