

1957

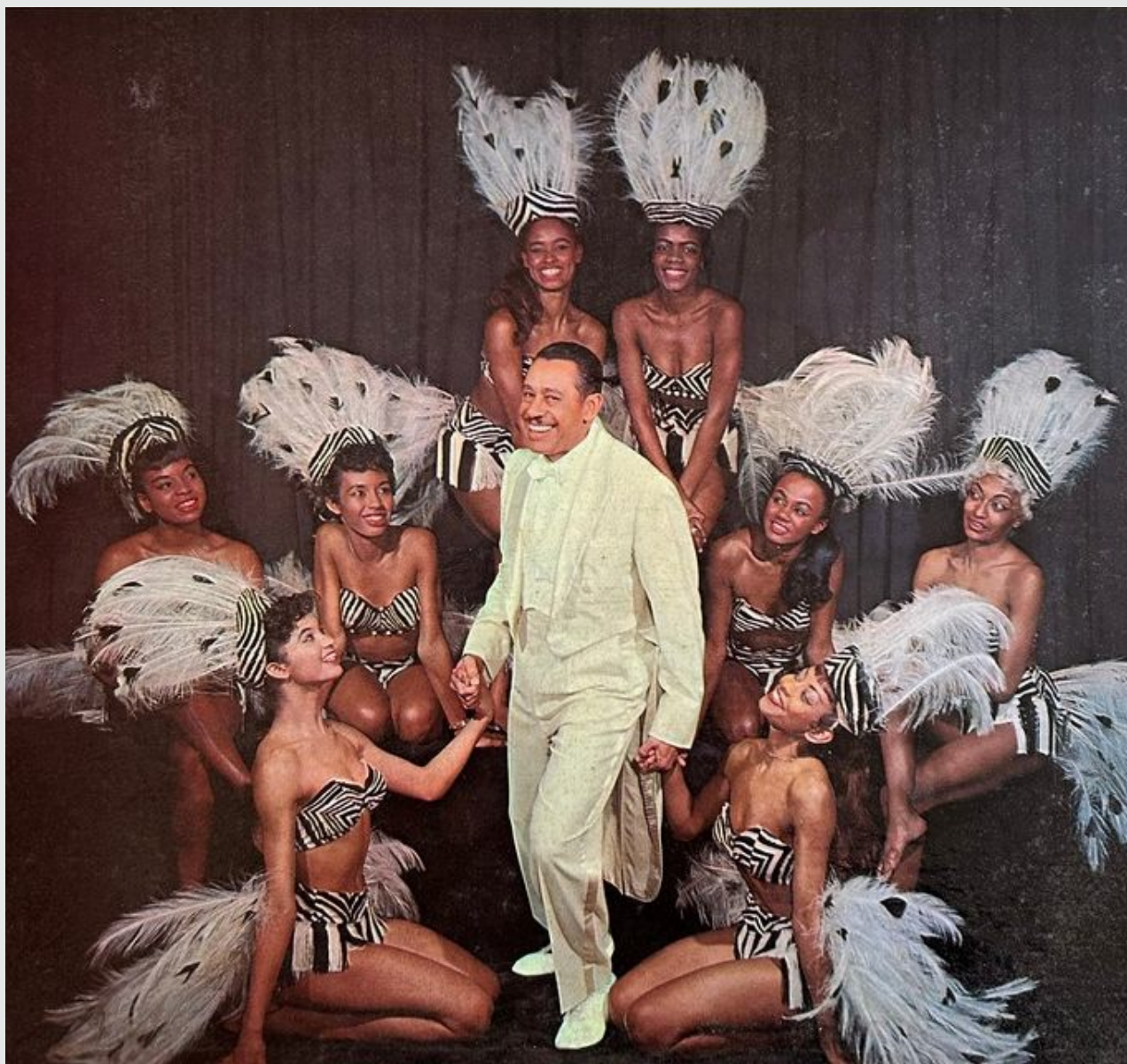
CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

THE "COTTON CLUB REVUE"
IN MIAMI, LAS VEGAS, AND NEW YORK

THE KING OF HI DE HO ON TELEVISION
ON THE SET OF "ST. LOUIS BLUES"

THE CAST FROM SALLIE BLAIR
TO ABBEY LINCOLN

THE ALBUM ON GONE
THE NAT KING COLE SHOW





This "magazine" is a fierce attempt to share our knowledge about Cab Calloway, his music, and his musicians. It is inspired by our website founded in 2006:

WWW.THEHIDEHOBLOG.COM

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Aren't we smart?

All the links are now either clickable or scannable and offer you a direct access to the sound, video or the article online

Due to our exhaustive approach of the Cotton Club Revue, the pages of the articles dealing with another topic have this blue background

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MAURI LEIGHTON'S VOICE AND CAREER

A killing profile

Most biographies of Cab Calloway, whether penned by jazz journalists or academic specialists, curiously omit 1957 entirely. Yet this year marked a pivotal moment in the entertainer's remarkable career trajectory. Here was a man who had experienced meteoric success in the 1930s and weathered the turbulent 1940s—riding high at his peak before plummeting as the big band era collapsed. After reinventing himself with a “highbrow” turn as Sportin’ Life in Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess*, Calloway was ready to roll the dice once more on career reinvention.

Producer Murray Weinger conceived *The Cotton Club Revue* as an exercise in strategic nostalgia, designed to transport audiences back to the golden age of nightclub entertainment. Picture the scene: scantily clad chorus girls adorned with little more than feathers, dancing in perfect synchronization to a polished jazz orchestra backing a charismatic master of ceremonies. Who better to fill that role than Cab Calloway himself? With the legendary Cotton Club name as their calling card, the possibilities seemed limitless.

And so began Calloway’s calculated gamble—fitting for a man who relished bets—as *The Cotton Club Revue* premiered in Miami Beach. The setting was grimly ironic: segregated Florida, where white audiences eagerly applauded Black performers they wouldn’t acknowledge on the street. Success came swiftly, propelling the production to equally segregated Las Vegas, then Washington, and ultimately New York, where they performed in Central Park. The show would return to Florida for winter seasons, with this touring model sustaining three seasons of varying fortune, including ventures into South America. Critical reception proved as versatile as Calloway’s career itself. Reviews ranged from rapturous—“one of the finest and fastest revues since the heyday of the old Harlem spot”—to scathing: “overmatched, outdated.”

Regardless of critical opinion, 1957 found Calloway thoroughly occupied, delivering nightly performances alongside a company of fifty artists. His schedule also included filming *St. Louis Blues* with Nat King Cole, extending their collaboration to television appearances.

While this volume was expected to be more concise than our previous editions covering 1932 and 1933, it is thicker than the others! It offers an equally compelling window into the lives of Black music hall performers and jazz musicians navigating the 1950s entertainment landscape—a world being utterly upended by television and rock ‘n’ roll.

Happy reading! We’re already deep into research for the next volume—be sure to check the final page for details.



KELLER WHALEN &
JEAN-FRANÇOIS PITET
visiting their new
HiDeHoBlog headquarters

JANUARY 1957



*"Old Mr. Show Business'
Cab Calloway is almost set
for the show." (Ebony, May 1957)*

JANUARY 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

7 (5:00 am)

Miami's Cotton Club is held up by 2 hooded gunmen (\$35,000 robbed in cash + \$6,000 belonged to Cab Calloway, currently appearing at the club), Miami, FL

14

Last night for the Cotton Club Revue at the Beachcomber, Miami, FL

15-April 13 (8:45 and 11:15 pm – 3rd show on Saturday)

The Cotton Club Revue, Copa City (3,000 seats), Miami, FL

16

Producer of The Cotton Club Revue, Murray Weinger, dies at the Copa of a heart attack, Miami Beach, FL

17 (1 pm)

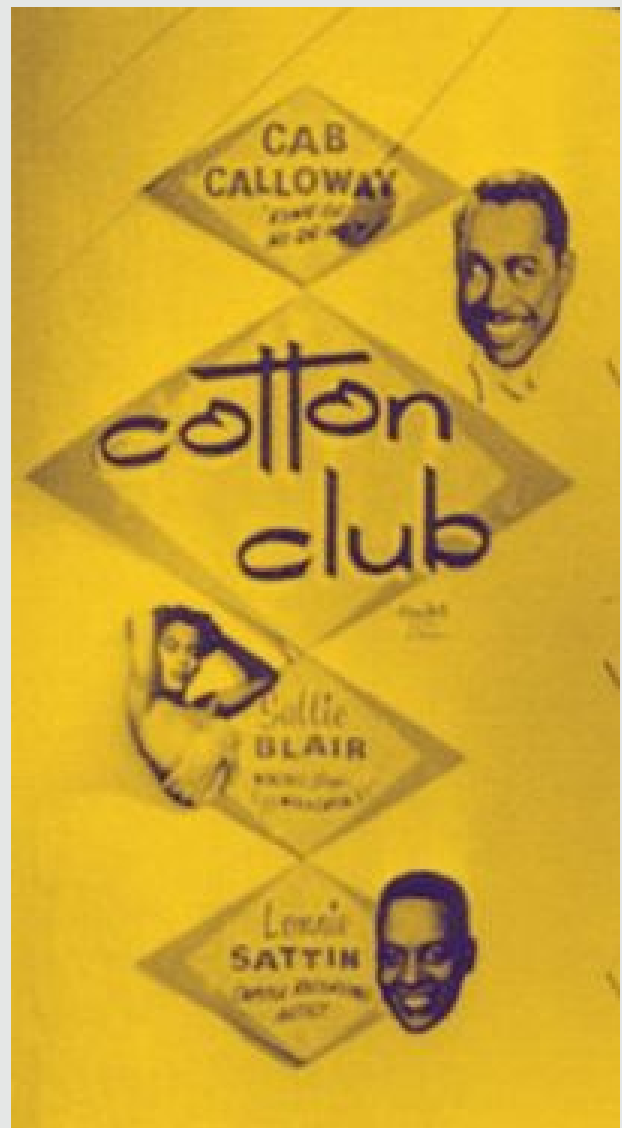
Attends the funerals of Murray Weinger, Memorial Chapel, 1850 Alton Road, Miami Beach, FL

19 (from 10:30 pm)-20 (until 3:00 pm)

Appearing during Telethon (along with Lonnie Sattin, Sally Blair, Gabby Hayes, June Valli, Billy Eckstine, Victor Borge, Count Basie, Milton Berle, the Vagabonds, Emmett Kelly, the Ritz Brothers, Dennis James, and Ted Mack), WCKT, Channel 7, Miami Beach Auditorium, Miami, FL

20 (4 pm-2 am)

Canceled appearance "due to illness", Tops in Rock 'n' Roll, Porky's, Fort Lauderdale, FL



Florida Finds Sepia Stars Solid Bait

Belafonte, Cab Among Naturals Set For Hotels

MIAMI, Fla. — With entertainment shifting to this section of the U.S. where moneyed folk seeking warmer climate managements naturally are searching for the top attractions for their floor shows in hotels and cafes.

And, as was true last season, many of the attractions sought are top Sepia names. Quite a few artists are already on the scene with others booked for the season. Such artists as Cab Calloway, Fats Domino, Pearl Bailey, Lena Horne, Dorothy Dandridge, Nat King Cole, Ivory Joe Hunter, Sammy Davis, Jr., Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Erroll Garner, and many more are being sought for Florida engagements with several either signed or showing a willingness to sign on the dotted line.

Two reasons stand out for this turn to Sepia entertainment. One is fact that most of the guests are from the East where Sepia and interracial entertainment is welcomed. Then there is the matter of box office appeal. It has been proved that gates soar when the top Sepia stars appear on location.

Such artists as Billy Daniels, the

Original Ink Spots, Dorothy Dandridge, Cab Calloway, Sammy Davis, Jr., Nat King Cole and others have combined to set marks at spots that have stood through several seasons.

When the plan to book Sepia talent was first announced here it was doubted in some quarters that such performances would be welcomed. The doubt was soon dispelled. Artists like Jo Baker, Davis, Daniels, Horne, Dandridge, came into the spots here and patronage increased. With the issue settled most hotels and cafes have increased the tempo of Sepia bookings.

For a number of years California attracted most of the Sepia stars in winter. There was more work in California and here in Florida during cold weather than was available in New York and Chicago. But only the West Coast welcomed the Sepia artists. Now with Florida in the picture, California gets only part of the attractions. A few stay on East coast but majority of the non-Coast travelers hit the trail for Florida.

The Chicago Defender, Jan 5, 1957

The Times Recorder, Zanesville, OH, Jan 5, 1957

Cotton Club Reborn With Cab as Overseer

MIAMI — The Cotton Club, fabulous Broadway spot of the glittering thirties, was reborn again here Saturday night with Cab Calloway waving the magic wand that conjures up visions of lush days gone by.

The remarkable Cab, whose entertainment days began back in the later twenties, was on hand with amazingly youthful vitality as he sang, danced and generally cavorted as the brilliant sun in a fabulous array of stars here in Miami's version of the Cotton Club Review which opened Saturday night on Miami Beach at the new Cotton Club.

Cab headed a cast that included George Kirby, exciting Sally Blair, Lonnie Sattin, Lit-

tle Willie Graham, the Wayne Robinson trio, Sonny Til's Orioles and the Norma Miller dancers.

BENNIE DAVIS, the song-writer, produces the show and also composed several original numbers with Clarence Robinson, veteran producer, on hand to aid in the staging of the breath-taking hour and a half of entertainment.

The revue is a definite challenge to those who say show business is dead and you almost feel as if you are seeing ghosts as Cab leads his orchestra with such old timers as Lamar Wright in the personnel . . . and the brilliant uptempo dancing of the beautiful chorus

line so reminiscent of the old Cotton Club days.

Cab, scintillating in a manner that only a Calloway could handle, gives the show credence but it also serves as a beautiful background for the extraordinary talents of two talented newcomers . . . Sally Blair, one of the most beautiful entertainers of our day . . . and handsome Lonnie Sattin, whose big voice is catapulting him into the front ranks of bigtimers.

There is also that funny man George Kirby at his best. And this million dollars worth of talent is crammed into a spectacular one and a half hours. It's truly a great show and if this can't beat television, then nothing can.—AL DUNMORE.

The Pittsburgh Courier, Jan 5, 1957

SWEETS TREATS

THOSE FAMOUS CLARK KIDS, whose acts literally rocked Miami Beach's fabulous Cotton Club first-nighters, are a tot-teen brother and sister routine that's chock-full of stardust. So versatile is the Cab Calloway show—and the kids—that Miami Life's (yes, Miami Life!) Lee Mason, devoted his entire column of Dec. 29 to the show . . . And little Michelle Clark (my honey) now enrolled at Douglas elementary during her Miami stay, stops by the office each day to give her columnist boy-friend a big hug and a kiss . . . Michelle's brother, Elia, the other 50 percent of the Clark Kids act, is a sure bet for stardom—they're simply terrific!

'Porgy 'n Bess' to be shown on TV

NEW YORK — Plans were completed here last week for presentation of the all-colored "Porgy and Bess" musical on television.

The only things standing in the way of official announcement at AFRO press time were the final okay of Ira Gershwin, surviving member of the brother team which wrote the score, and dates for its TV showing.

Under the proposal, the production will be uncut and uncensored.

SINCE IT will take about two-and-a-half hours to produce, the show will be split into two parts. They will be shown on successive nights, most likely a Sunday and Monday.

The 9-to-10 o'clock Sunday periods is presently occupied by Alcoa and the 8-to-9:30 Monday time slot is held by "Pro-



CAB CALLOWAY

ducers' Showcase." Both are in accord with the plan to bring "Porgy" to video.

IT IS reliably reported that Showcase Productions is paying \$112,000 for the rights alone, the coin going to the Gershwin estate and others involved in the successful and long-running venture.

The show will be brought in as a complete tried-and-tested package, as in the case of Mary Martin's "Peter Pan," and it's planned as the initial entry for the '57-'58 semester, immediately on the heels of a 12-week "Porgy" tour of the summer tent theatres.

All the top stars of "Porgy," including Cab Calloway recreating his "Sportin' Life" role, will be assigned to the two-part spectacular.

The Afro American, Jan 5, 1957
(read page 136)

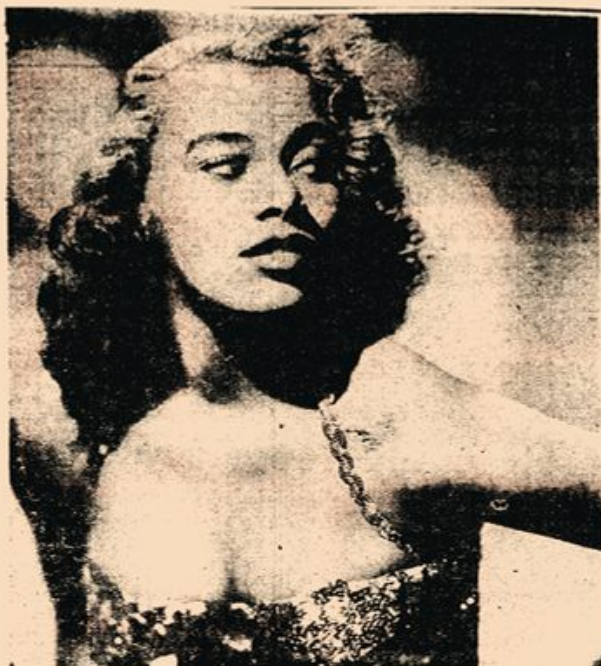
'Harlem' Vidpix Series

New York, Jan. 6.—Studio Films has finished production of 13 vidpix in a new series, "Harlem After Dark," in which Count Basie, Sarah Vaughan, Nat Cole, Lionel Hampton, Dinah Washington, Cab Calloway, Faye Adams and Duke Ellington guest.

Variety, Jan 7, 1957.

In fact, those short films were another scheme of exploitation for the old Snader Telescriptions and were eventually released under the series title "Showtime At The Apollo." Nothing new under the sun...

The Miami Times, Jan 12, 1957



SALLIE BLAIR

Cotton Club No Longer Just Memory; Miama Has Latest

MIAMI, Fla. — Back in 1927 CBS announcer Ted Husing blasted to the world the arrival of a new band from an old spot that was none other than the famed Cotton Club located in New York at 142 street and Lenox ave. The new band was Duke Ellington's.

For several years the Cotton Club was a national favorite, even though located in Harlem, where Hollywood and Broadway stars visited regularly. Then, suddenly, the Club closed temporarily only to open again in downtown Broadway. When that later closed the name "Cotton Club" was no longer the thing so far as night clubs were concerned.

However today there is a Cotton Club here, operated by Murray Weinger, who began his spotlighting here with the Copa City that closed two years ago. This Cotton club, like the old one, has Cab Calloway, the hi de ho prince who followed Ellington into the New York original. Cab, here as at the New York spot, heads his own band, a thing he has not been doing for past few seasons. This

one is as potent as the old one. With Cab here is a package show just as was true of his stay in New York's edition. In the old

days he had Ethel Waters, Lena Horne and countless others who went on to fame as part of his show. They are gone from the Cotton Club scene now but new-faces and voices appear with the same class as those in the old show. This would include Lonnie Satin, the popular singer seen on the Ed Sullivan show last week; Sallie Blair, sultry one of song and instead of the late Bill Robinson being around for tap dancing chores, Cab's show presents a newie in Will Gaines.

Then there are Michelle Clark, a dancing miss who also sings well; Norma Miller, one of those real class dames and the mimic ace George Kirby. Yes, the Cotton Club, 1926-1927 edition in Dixie is upholding the name and fame that came about first in Harlem and later, on Broadway, both in New York.

Daily Defender, Chicago, IL
Jan 16, 1957

Background on Plans Weinger Had to Shift CC Revue to Copa City

Miami Beach, Jan. 22. Sudden death of Murray Weinger last week (16) may have negated planned move of his smash Cotton Club revue from present old Beachcomber site to Copa City. Latter is the lavish nitery he built eight years ago and lost three seasons back after a series of unprofitable runs.

Despite reports that move was to have been made to gain larger seating capacity, the reverse is true. The Beachcomber layout had some 200 more seating capacity. However, Weinger's goal for years had been to regain the lush edifice he titled Copa City, after spending close to \$1,000,000 on its construction and interior equipment. Those close to him say it was a dream-offer, when the moveover deal was proffered by present owner Lou Chesler, to bring in his Cotton Club revue. Despite the calculated loss in weekly revenue, Weinger took on the deal and was in the midst of negotiations which arranged for payoffs of lines and long-standing debts to acts such as Jane Powell, Nat Cole, as well as issuance of liquor license, when a heart attack felled him.

Weinger's brother George, Sam Newfeld, Benny Davis and another partner are, at present, holding the Cab Calloway-Cotton Club revue package at the Beachcomber location. The biggery can gross well over \$60,000 weekly. If near-capacity business is maintained, and higher if the sellouts and three shows on heavy nights are continued.

Besides personal-pride motive in the contemplated move to Copa City, Weinger had pointed out that the more modern kitchen and equipment there would result in better patron relations; that the larger cocktail lounge-bar adjunct, running on an all-night policy, would have made up, in part, the loss in main-room seating capacity returns.

Cotton Club revue continues to do what is probably the best business any indie night club has seen since the big hotels took the play away with name act attractions three seasons back.

Variety, Jan 23, 1957

Fla. Cotton Club's Copa City Switch To Beat Seat Rap

The Cotton Club, which according to early season biz is the hit show of the Miami Beach area, is moving from the old Beachcomber site to the nearby Copa City in an effort to find more seating capacity. This means saddling itself with an additional \$20,000 expense. Regulations of the American Guild of Variety Artists stipulate that anyone taking over a nitery site also takes over its old obligations. There's a contract default to Jane Powell on the books from a previous season, when Lou Chesler was the Copa City head.

AGVA stated that it will permit operator Murray Weinger to take over the cafe which he operated for many years if he proved that he was making a settlement with Miss Powell.

The midseason move into another site is an unprecedented step.

In the Beachcomber, Weinger had moved up to three shows nightly, and in order to extend his grosses is moving into Copa City. Latter spot a couple of years ago turned into an auction house, which also expired.

The Cotton Club show is topped by Cab Calloway, Sallie Blair and Lonnie Satin, which will continue intact for the rest of the season. Copa City, of course, will be rechristened Cotton Club.

Variety, Jan 16, 1957

The Miami Herald,
Jan 17, 1957

Night Club Impresario Dies at 39

By GEORGE GILBODY
Herald Staff Writer

Death ended the career of night club impresario Murray Weinger Wednesday a few hours before he was to launch his newest venture.

Mr. Weinger, 39, a rich-man poor-man figure in many bankruptcies and income tax problems, suffered what appeared to be a heart attack shortly before noon. He died 40 minutes later in the emergency room of Mount Sinai Hospital.

He was stricken at the very moment the Miami Beach City council was acting to approve his application for a night club license.

Mr. Weinger, of 4489 N. Michigan Ave., Miami Beach, had planned to open his Cotton Club show in another building Wednesday night.

After Mr. Weinger's attack but before he died, his attorney, Ben Cohen, said his client had planned to move the Cotton Club to the vacant Copa City building at Dade Boulevard and Bay Road.

On Jan. 8 two masked and armed men robbed the Cotton Club of \$36,000. The loot was the club's \$10,000 weekend receipts plus \$6,000 belonging to Cab Calloway, orchestra leader starring in the club's show. The case is still under investigation.

Cohen said Mr. Weinger had planned to open another show at the Cotton Club.

Mr. Weinger was associated with his brother, George, in his latest ventures.

In addition to his brother George, Mr. Weinger is survived by his wife, Rusty; two daughters, Barbara and Merry, and another brother, Dr. Irving Weinger, Brooklyn.

Services will be at 1 p.m. today in the Riverside Beach Memorial Chapel, 815 Alton Rd.

WALTER WINCHELL

Weinger's

Cotton Club

Trend-Starter?

THE COTTON CLUB Show (Miami Beach), a terrific crowd-getter—may start a new trend in cafes offering girl-shows . . . The \$4.50 minimum can be used for beverages or food. The latter consists of chicken or barbecued spare ribs (or a portion of both), a dash of cole slaw, coffee, tea or milk plus ice cream. No salad. No sea food. No silverware. No tablecloth. Real napkin because "paper ones cost just as much" says landlord George Weinger. His laundry bills are "nothing" . . . His swiftly paced one hour and 45 minutes show (starring Cab Calloway) costs only \$12,000 a week . . . A cast of 40 . . . "I can't buy any name act for that money these days!" he punctuated. "Too many acts forced us into this new gold mine. We couldn't afford to give them their astronomical salaries!" . . . Translation: One of the top spots in show business is gone for "stars" who outpriced themselves out of a Miami holiday.

* * *

The Miami Herald,
Jan 31, 1957

Top Revue at Cotton Club

Cab Calloway Group Big Hit in Miami

By AL DUNMORE

MIAMI — The unprecedented success of Cab Calloway's Cotton Club revue, now moving into its third sensational week, has caused a rebirth of interest in Negro talent here at this winter resort.

Cab and his revue, which includes such stars as Sallie Blair, Lonnie Sattin, George Kirby, Willie Gaines, Joe Chisholm, the Norma Miller Dancers and a gorgeous line of girls, has proved to be the "shot in the arm" needed by the nightclubs, and now the other entrepreneurs are going all out for septa talent.

LAST YEAR, the strip-teasers took over the spots once boasting top-drawer names, and only the hotels were featuring stars. The nightclub business began to die and it appeared as if another phase of entertainment was through . . . but Cab Calloway, a real trouper from his heart, has proved that show business isn't dead.

Old timers watched him line up a show that was actually filled with many new names although the hands of established star-makers were in the background. Assisted by Bennie Davis, the

songwriter; Clarence Robinson, noted show producer, and Norma Miller, Cab took a bunch of youngsters and built a show that is being compared with the original Cotton Club revue.

AND LIKE the original Cotton Club revue, new stars are being made. Sallie Blair, the sensational young singer from Baltimore, really reaches star billing with her fierce "Black Magic" number; Lonnie Sattin, the youthful Philadelphia with the big voice, is the central figure in the dynamic "Wattussi" production number that also features exciting dancing by the de Jeong Dancers; George Kirby commands his spot with his usual excellence, and both Willie Gaines, a finished tap dancer, and Joe Chisholm, whose baton twirling is almost unbelievable, are show stoppers.

Surprise of the show, however, is the Cab, himself, who energetically works throughout in the role of band leader, emcee and star. Cab is old "Mr. Show Business" himself when he is leading his band and singing the numbers that made him famous, such as "It Ain't Necessarily So" and the ever-green "Minnie the Moocher." But he also proves he can still score with new numbers when he introduces "Rock and Roll Romeo" with Norma Miller sharing the spotlight in a very funny dig at Elvis and then dares to cope with show-stealing Michelle Clark, a mite from New York who really challenges Cab in the closing number that leads into the colorful, thrilling finale production numbers.

The Pittsburgh Courier,
Jan 19, 1957

Oakland Tribune, OH
Jan 23, 1957

Cab Calloway Sparks Revue At Miami Beach Cotton Club

By HY GARDNER

NEW YORK, Jan. 23—Murray Weinger's Miami Beach Cotton Club show, sparkplugged by Cab Calloway, is far and away the most exciting, talent-packed revue in all Cotton Club show history. Every act, from Lonnie Sattin (the next Harry Belafonte) to Cab himself is a show-stopper—so thrilling a combination of talented people the audience as well as the cast is left limp and panting at final curtain. It belongs in a Broadway theater more than any musical I've ever seen . . .

MURRAY WEINGER'S Miami Beach Cotton Club show, spark-plugged by Cab Calloway, is far and away the most exciting, talent-packed revue in all Cotton Club show history. Every act, from Lonnie Sattin (the next Harry Belafonte) to Cab himself is a show-stopper—so thrilling a combination of talented people the audience as well as the cast is left limp and panting at final curtain. It belongs in a Broadway theater more than any musical I've ever seen.

Star News, Pasadena, CA,
Jan 22, 1957

Miami News,
Jan 19 1957

Cotton Club, Miami Beach

Murray Weinger presents Cab Calloway, Lonnie Sattin, Sallie Blair, George Kirby, Will Gaines, Joe Chisholm, Norma Miller Dancers, Angel Trio, Orville (3), Cotton Club Dancers; created and written by Benny Davis; supervised by Murray Nelson; dance director, Clarence Robinson; Cab Calloway, Orville (11); \$3.50 food and beverage minimum.

This is Murray Weinger's newest venture since Cops City closed a couple seasons ago. It looks like he's come up with the independent night club that finally will give the hotel-cafes a stiff run for the entertainment buck.

Weinger has taken over the Beachcomber, which gave up the same-competitor ghost last year, renamed it the Cotton Club with decor to match, and installed one of the fastest revues since the heyday of the old Harlem spot in the early '30s. It's quite a feat, this duplication of the busy pace and give-them-all performances of yore, but with Cab Calloway, back in his familiar role as leader of the frenzied flock of some 30 septa dancers and sock acts, it's the talented package around for the many who've never seen this type of production before. The headlining tempo is a far cry from the studied lip specs and the few revues still playing the cafe circuit.

The 90-minute package is filled with performers of all shapes, sizes and line talents. Concentration on the upbeat pace lends ring even to the solo performers. Lonnie Sattin is a solid hit with his intelligently blended group of rhythms and ballads. Suggest with-rever to his contrasting "I Believe," plus "Stand Up and Fight" from "Carmen Jones." A tall, good-looking bary with high range, he's a stand-out.

Sallie Blair, sassy looker with red-tipped coiff and slinky green to match works over the busy torch-acts, then applies a wild, albeit shrewdly disciplined, approach to a long arrangement of "Old Black Magic" with interweavings of "Baldy Jim Joe," "Mistide" and assorted Calloway song bit excerpts. It's a crazy, unbalanced, mixed-up segment that keeps the reaction

In his slots, Calloway darts a comedy-lined "contained" version of "Romeo & Juliet" with Norma Miller (who could be given more to do with her flair for comedies and plastic-pant), for a colorful break in the song-dance roundup. He takes over to lead the company in Benny Davis-cliffed first big number, "Life," which brings on Will Gaines for gyp-racing tape, and team again, this time with clever midget Michelle Clark, in another Davis coupe, the hit of the show and marked for the top billing: "Evilina." Little Miss Clark handles herself with all the aplomb of a vet concert.

Other big, fast and flashy production number is "Call Of The Wild" pegged on a jungle beat which amounts to frenzied pitch and clanking fire-crack dance. Lonnie Sattin plays lead to the theme in fine fashion, overall impact leaving the audience limp.

George Kirby spells the evening tempo with his septets. It's a tough spot and he handles it smoothly, winning in upper-bracket returns when he hit the Pearl Bailey hit for top spot.

Several come-baton work of adept Joe Chisholm adds another effective break for the production. Wonder is a sampling of Calloway hits-in and reprise on Cotton Club of old to another Davis original, "Dear The Town," a rousing finale that keeps them pounding for multiple bars.

The well-contained unit utilizes effective and easily handled set-pieces and slide-changes to frame the production changes. This is a package that can play anywhere, in theatre or big clubs looking for a departure from the norm. The values are all there, the more a night out in the best Cotton Club tradition, the staging an ongoing sensory-over of cool reaction that is keyed to the act with which the large company attack their assignments.

As this stand, with the lowest food and beverage minimum in town, the word seems to have spread fast: the combo of authenticity and money-hungry package groups keeping the 100-seater filled for the forecast of the minimum four weeks—some much as that third show was added on last weekend.

Let's

Variety, Jan 19, 1957

The Miami News,
Jan 30, 1957

WATCH

THE
CEREBRAL PALSY
TELETHON
TONITE
ON
CHANNEL

7

WCKT
10:30 P.M.
SEE

★ DENNIS JAMES ★
★ TONI GILMAN ★
★ BOB HOPE ★
★ MILTON BERLE ★
★ THE VAGABONDS ★
★ EMMETT KELLY ★
★ GABBY HAYES ★
★ CAB CALLOWAY ★
★ LONNIE SATTIN ★
★ SALLY BLAIR ★
★ JUNE VALLI ★
★ THE RITZ BROTHERS ★
★ BILLY ECKSTINE ★
★ TED MACK AND HIS ★
★ ORIGINAL AMATEURS ★



PAULA WATSON, singer-pianist, opens in the Cotton Club Hi-De-Ho Room tonight.

Murray Weinger presents **NEW Cotton Club REVUE**

STARRING
CAB CALLOWAY
SALLIE BLAIR • LONNIE SATTIN
• GEORGE KIRBY

CAST OF 50 • World's most beautiful Sepia girls
Cab Calloway's Orchestra
Direction Eddie Barefield

SHOW TIMES 8:45 and 11:15

Norma Miller Dancers
Angelo Trio
Will Gaines
Joe Chisholm

All Nite Rockin'
"HI-DE-HO" ROOM
The Cab Calloway Quintet
The Orioles
Wayne Robinson
NO COVER MINIMUM
DINNER \$3.50

Reservations
MAC SHERMAN
JE. 1-5351

the Cotton Club
MEMBER DINERS CLUB
Miami Beach



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COMPLETE DINNERS \$3.50

Reservations
MAC SHERMAN
JE. 1-5351

the Cotton Club
MEMBER DINERS CLUB
Miami Beach • on Site of Beachcomber



Murray Weinger presents **NEW Cotton Club REVUE**

STARRING
CAB CALLOWAY
SALLIE BLAIR • LONNIE SATTIN • GEORGE KIRBY

CAST OF 50 • World's most beautiful Sepia girls
Cab Calloway's Orchestra • Direction Eddie Barefield

SHOW TIME 8:45 and 12
3 SHOWS SAT.

Production Staged and conceived
by Benny Davis; Supervised by
Mervyn Nelson; Dance Director,
Clarence Robinson

All Nite Rockin'
"HI-DE-HO" ROOM
The Cab Calloway Quintet
The Orioles
Wayne Robinson
NO COVER MINIMUM
DINNER \$3.50

Reservations
MAC SHERMAN
JE. 1-5351

the Cotton Club
MEMBER DINERS CLUB
Miami Beach



MURRAY WEINGER'S **NEW Cotton Club REVUE**

STARRING
CAB CALLOWAY
SALLIE BLAIR
• LONNIE SATTIN
• GEORGE KIRBY

Production Staged and
conceived by Benny Davis;
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Mervyn Nelson;
Dance Director,
Clarence Robinson

Reservations
MAC SHERMAN
JE. 1-5351
Shows: 9 and 12
3 Shows Sat.
Member Diner's
Club

All Nite Rockin'
"HI-DE-HO" ROOM
PAULA
WATSON
CAB CALLOWAY QUINTET
THE ORIOLES
WAYNE ROBINSON
NO COVER MINIMUM

the Cotton Club
DADE BLVD. AT ALTON RD. — MIAMI BEACH



MURRAY WEINGER'S **NEW Cotton Club REVUE**

STARRING
CAB CALLOWAY
SALLIE BLAIR • LONNIE SATTIN
• GEORGE KIRBY

CAST OF 50 • World's most beautiful Sepia girls
Cab Calloway's Orchestra
Direction Eddie Barefield

SHOW TIMES 9 AND 12

Production Staged and
conceived
by Benny Davis;
Supervised by
Mervyn Nelson;
Dance Director,
Clarence Robinson

All Nite Rockin'
"HI-DE-HO" ROOM
The Cab Calloway Quintet
The Orioles
Wayne Robinson
NO COVER MINIMUM
DINNER \$3.50

Reservations
MAC SHERMAN
JE. 1-5351

the Cotton Club
MEMBER DINERS CLUB
Miami Beach



Murray Weinger presents **NEW Cotton Club REVUE**

STARRING
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SHOW TIMES
8:45 and 11:15
3 SHOWS SAT.

All Nite Rockin'
"HI-DE-HO" ROOM
The Cab Calloway Quintet
The Orioles
Wayne Robinson
NO COVER MINIMUM
DINNER \$3.50

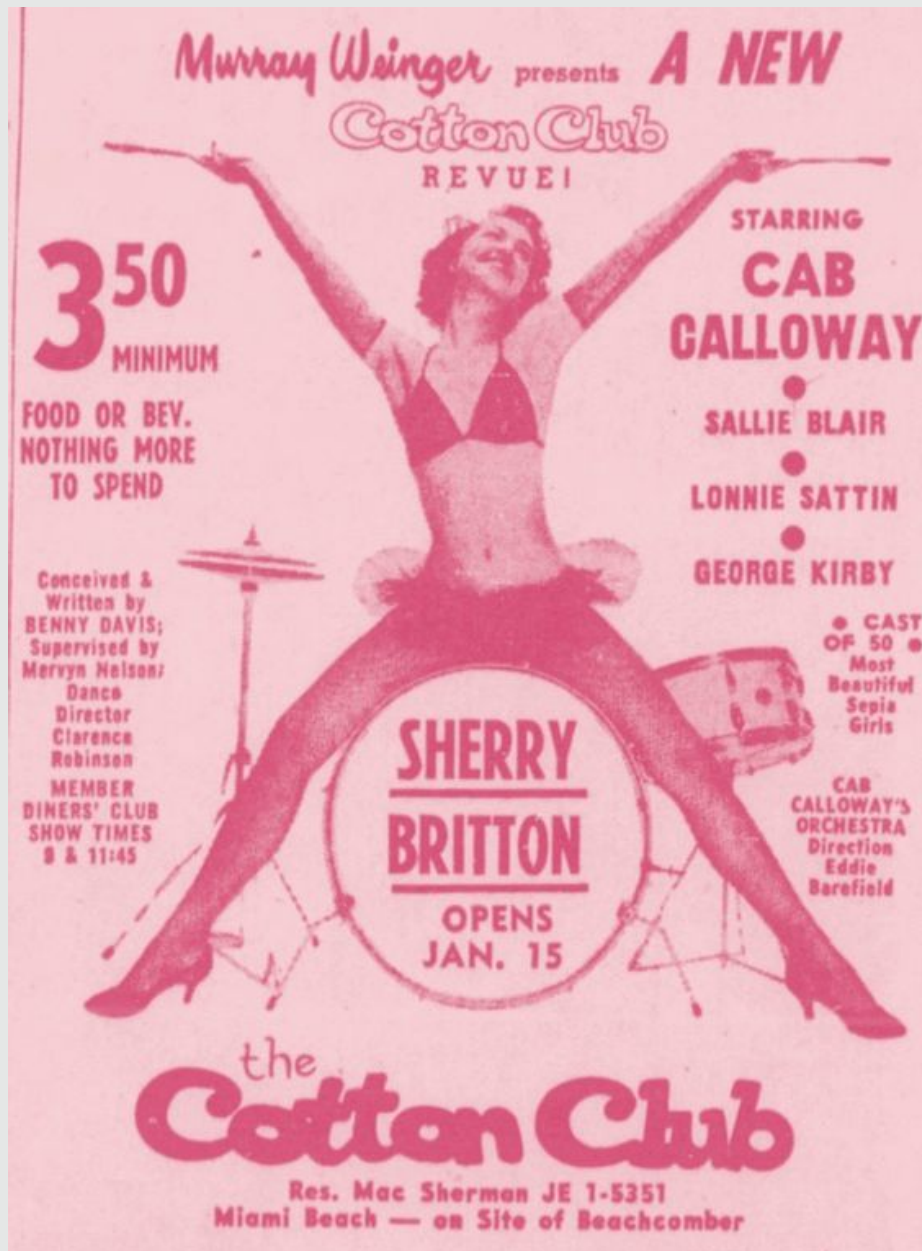
Reservations
MAC SHERMAN
JE. 1-5351

the Cotton Club
MEMBER DINERS CLUB
Miami Beach • on Site of Beachcomber



AN AMBITIOUS REVUE

LET'S SET THE COTTON CLUB IN MIAMI!



The first ad printed in Miami newspapers, on January 1, 1957. The forthcoming year was expected to be successful for everyone involved in the revue—except its producer... (Miami News, FL)

In the fifties, Miami became the place to be: hotels and resorts, nightclubs, beaches—the city was magical. Before retirees arrived, tourists were the main source of income. It made sense for entrepreneurs to try their luck with an ambitious revue. Glamour, chorus girls, tap dance, and entertainment were on the menu. And if you added Cab Calloway as the main course, you were headed for success. So they said. And so it happened... well, at the beginning.



Murray Weinger
(1918-1957)

A SECRET PROJECT BY PRODUCER MURRAY WEINGER

From early on, the Cotton Club Revue in Miami was a project planned with big ambitions. It must be said that it had been growing in Murray Weinger's mind for a long time. The "real" Cotton Club in Downtown Manhattan had closed in 1940, and this young Miami cabaret owner—who until now had experienced more downs than ups—was determined to resurrect the prestigious nightclub. Weinger negotiated for the use of the name "Cotton Club" and wanted to build on his ambition. "His biggest attempt in the club field was during the early 1950s when he operated the fabulous Copa City Club [in Miami Beach]. (...) The extravagant figures paid the stars apparently helped the club along on its ultimate road to bankruptcy." (*Miami News*, Jan 17, 1957).

The winter season of 1955-1956 had been poor: the nightclubs were devoted to stripteasers, and only the fancy hotels could feature stars and top-drawer names. "The nightclub business began to die, and it appeared as if another phase of entertainment was through." (Dunmore, Jan 19, 1957).

Secretly, Weinger got in touch with **Clarence Robinson** (1900-1979). The latter had already produced revues at the original Cotton Club and the Apollo, and had even choreographed the movie "Stormy Weather."

This was a man of experience, besides being married to Hyacinth Curtis, a former Cotton Club chorus girl.

They strengthened their team with writer-director **Benny Davis** (1895-1979), and worked in secret for six months. Benny Davis also had great expertise in the field, having achieved success with Eddie Cantor's "Margie" and written the lyrics for many songs from the Cotton Club revues, such as "Doin' The Suzy-Q," "Frisco Flo," "Hi De Ho Miracle Man," "Hi De Ho Romeo," "I'm Madly In Love With You," "Miss Hallelujah Brown," etc. Fans of Cab Calloway are obviously familiar with that songbook.

As confirmed by first reviewers like Al Dunmore, "the revue is a definite challenge to those who say show business is dead." (*Pittsburgh Courier*, January 5, 1957).



Cab Calloway's repertoire by Benny Davis dated back to the heyday of the Cotton Club, in New York.

A TROUPE OF 48 ARTISTS

From the beginning of October 1956, the press announced that Clarence Robinson had cast Cab Calloway as the top attraction for his forthcoming project in Miami.

According to *The New York Age*, Duke Ellington's son, Mercer, and his orchestra would take care of the musical arrangements (Oct. 6, 1956). Casting calls were held in New York, as were the two-week rehearsals.

Then came three weeks of rehearsals in Miami, where the troupe was transported by special coach.

In between, a tryout week was held at Ciro's in Hollywood. Elvis Presley attended. Twice!

In November 1956, the press described the cast of the upcoming review at the Cotton Club of Miami. Already announced around Cab Calloway were the likes of Sally Blair, George Kirby, Willie Gaines, and the dance troupe of Norma Miller. There was already talk of a probable "segment on nationwide TV"...

The cost of production was estimated at \$100,000 and included an orchestra of 14 musicians, 8 dancers, 4 showgirls, and other attractions, for a total of 48 people.



The Beachcomber, in 1946

CURTAIN UP AT THE BEACHCOMBER

The Cotton Club Revue of 1957 lifted the curtain at the end of December 1956 at the Cotton Club—the former location of the Beachcomber (1,100 seats, 1271 Dade Blvd). The show lasted 90 minutes. "It's truly a great show, and if this cannot beat television, then nothing can." (Al Dunmore)

The food and drink minimum was only \$3.50 per person (single menu with fried chicken or spare ribs), a price quite reasonable considering the "quantity" and quality of the artists.

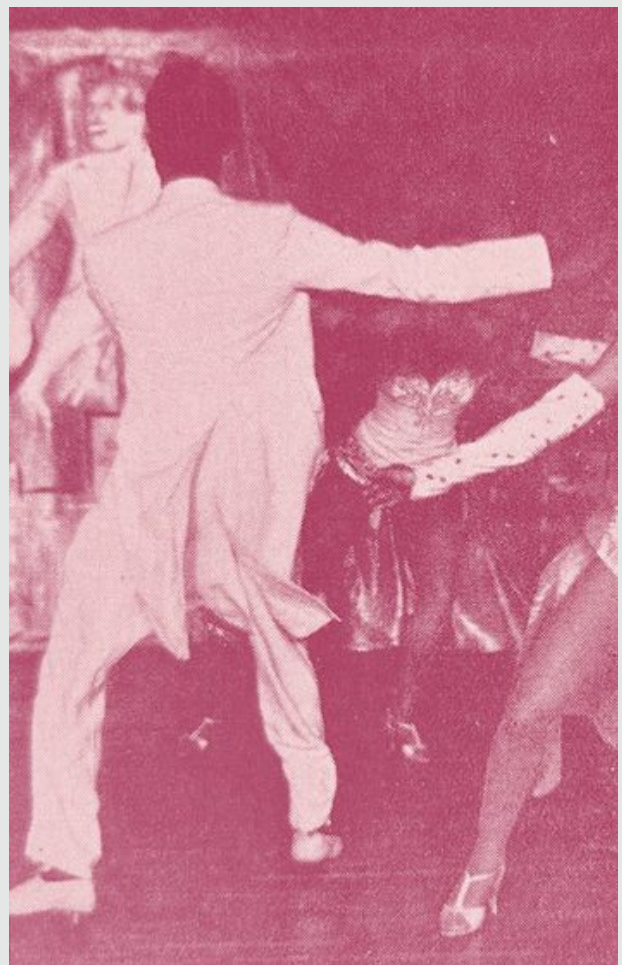
IMMEDIATE SUCCESS

Herb Rau of the Miami Daily News said, "The original Cotton Club never had it so good..."

"The Cotton Club, fabulous Broadway spot of the glittering thirties, was reborn again here Saturday night with Cab Calloway waving the magic wand that conjures up visions of lush days gone by." – Al Dunmore, Pittsburgh Courier, Jan 5, 1957

Old friend Walter Winchell confirmed: "The Cotton Club revue is jamming the old Beachcomber twice a night. The first floor show there to accomplish the feat. Zingy production, peopled with exciting and talented entertainers. A terrific crowd-getter. Swiftly-paced show starring Calloway."

Indeed, the success of the revue was immediate. Cab was praised for his everlasting youth and vitality on stage. Everybody was happy to see Cab "scintillating in a manner that only a Calloway could handle, giving the show credence." "Surprise of the show is Cab himself, who energetically works throughout in the role of band leader, emcee, and star. Cab is old 'Mr. Show Business' himself when he is leading his band and singing the numbers that made him famous. (...) But he also proves he can still score with new numbers (...), and then dares to cope with show-stealing Michelle Clark, a mite from New York (...) in a closing number that leads into the colorful, thrilling finale production numbers." (Dunmore)





But it was **Sallie Blair** (read our article below) who mainly attracted attention, especially with her 9-minute medley with “Hold ’Em Joe” and “That Old Black Magic,” which “automatically makes the word sex more exciting than respectable but no less than petit-point.” (*Cabaret*, Aug 1957). If you insist, we’ll talk about her again later...

Within just 10 days, 30,000 people attended “The hottest Miami Beach nightclub show in a decade!” And to cope with the influx, a third show was scheduled every night—a first in Miami since 1941! This success even gave ideas to the William Morris Agency, which asked Timmie Rogers to create a show in the style of the Cotton Club for the Elegante Theatre in Brooklyn the following March. NBC even considered televising the Miami show. This never materialized.

MOVING THE REVUE, GETTING A NEW LICENSE, SUDDENLY DYING: WEINGER’S FATE

Three weeks after the opening, on January 16, 1957, Murray Weinger, already suffering from Buerger’s disease, died of a heart attack at only 39 years old. He had just been trying to manage the transfer of the show from the Beachcomber to the former Copa City, a much bigger venue (capacity 3,000 people!) that he had led to closure the previous year. The Miami Beach council had just been acting to approve his application for a nightclub liquor license at the new venue... Weinger had even been planning to open a new revue at the Beachcomber with burlesque dancer Sherry Britton—she would eventually belly-button dance elsewhere in Miami Beach.

The Beachcomber and the Copa were almost on the same block—as was the chapel where Weinger’s funeral would be held.

Murray Weinger’s widow Rusty then took over the management.

Such unprecedented success caused a rebirth in “Negro talent here at this winter resort,” proving to be the “shot in the arm needed by the nightclubs, and now the other entrepreneurs are going all out for sepia talent” (*Dunmore, Pittsburgh Courier*, January 19, 1957).

Ebony, May 1957



Throwing arms up in triumphant gesture, Cab Calloway flashes famous smile which is duplicated in head on front of Miami Beach Cotton Club. The club, which charged a minimum of only \$3.50, drew capacity crowds, had to move from old Beachcomber site to 3,000 seat Copa City next door. It cost owners some \$100,000 to stage revue.

FROM MANHATTAN'S COTTON CLUB TO MIAMI'S

BENNY DAVIS: CAB'S SONGWRITER



Songsmith Benny Davis and Cab Calloway look over "Evalina," one of the songs he wrote for the revue. Caption said, "it's the first time locally a song has been published before a night club show opened with it." (Miami News, Dec 27, 1956). Note that we have never been able to locate this sheet music... Have you?

When you think of songwriter Benny Davis's connections with Cab Calloway, numerous tunes come to mind: "Hi-De-Ho Miracle Man," "Margie," "Frisco Flo," "She's Tall, She's Tan, She's Terrific" ... All those tunes emerge from a specific period: the Cotton Club years. With his partner in crime J. Fred Coots, Benny Davis has brought many hits for fancy revues. So, in 1956, when Benny Davis got involved in the secret Cotton Club Revue revival project with producer Murray Weinger, the famous lyricist had obviously the King of hi-de-ho in mind.

THE FAST PATH TO SHOW BUSINESS

Benny Davis was born in New York City on August 21, 1895, and embarked on a remarkable career that would span six decades in American popular music. Beginning his professional life in vaudeville as a teenager, Davis quickly developed the theatrical instincts and melodic sensibilities that would define his multifaceted career as songwriter, performer, producer, and champion of new talent.

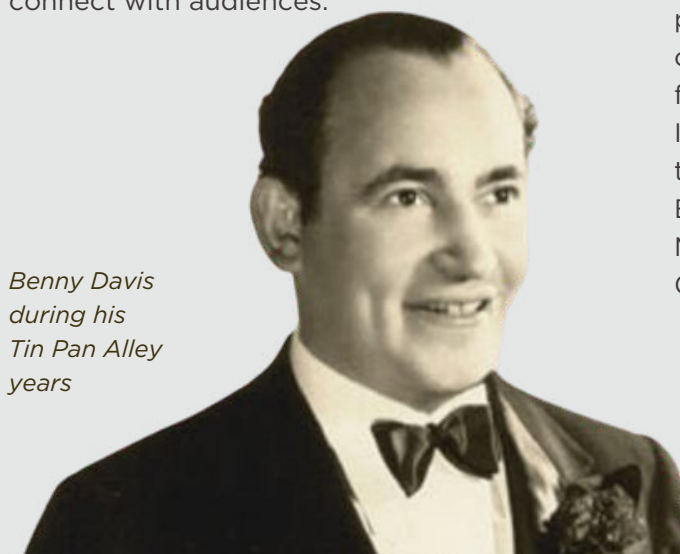
According to a newspaper column Davis himself wrote in 1931, he spent his early years on the streets of the Lower East Side of Manhattan with friends who would become legends—Eddie Cantor and Irving Berlin. This formative environment, rich with immigrant culture and theatrical ambition, shaped his understanding of popular entertainment.

When Davis was 14, his family moved to Portland, Oregon. For the next two years, he attended school, worked odd jobs, and joined a quartet that performed locally. But the lure of show business proved irresistible. In 1911, the 16-year-old star-struck youth left Portland for San Francisco aboard a coastal steamer, carrying his meager savings, a few personal belongings, and a small repertory of Yiddish and Irish ethnic songs.

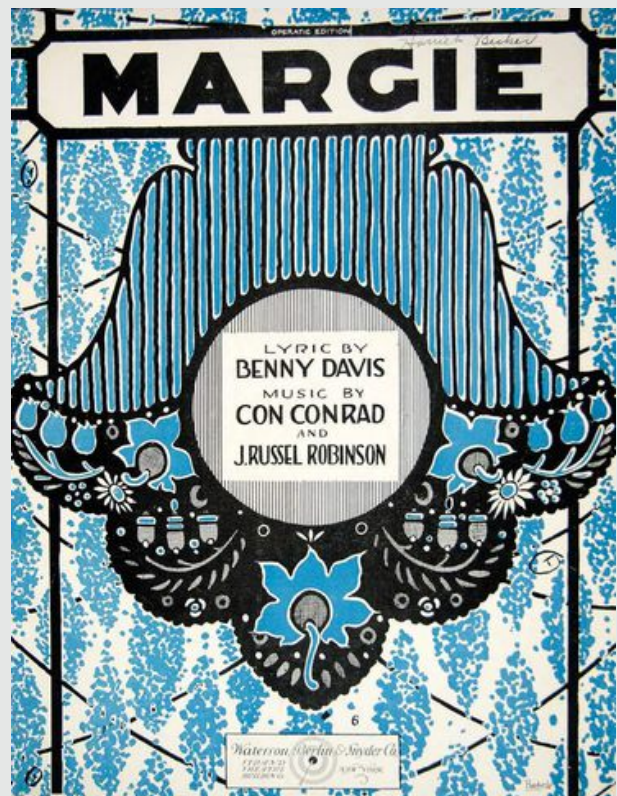
Having lost everything except his repertory and five cents to two card sharks during the boat trip, Davis took the first job he could get—singing in a San Francisco café. This inauspicious beginning launched what would become an extraordinary career. He also began writing songs in his spare time as he played the intimate clubs in Chicago and New York, though his early efforts were consistently rejected until World War I broke out and he connected with “Goodbye Broadway, Hello France.”

THE VAUDEVILLE YEARS

Davis entered the vaudeville circuit and performed extensively during his teens and early twenties. He notably served as accompanist for vaudeville star Blossom Seeley, traveling with Benny Fields’ tours. This period provided invaluable exposure to the entertainment world and allowed Davis to observe firsthand what made songs connect with audiences.



*Benny Davis
during his
Tin Pan Alley
years*



THE TIN PAN ALLEY ERA AND THE FIRST SONGWRITING SUCCESS

By the early 1920s, Davis had transitioned his focus to professional songwriting, dedicating himself fully to the craft of lyric writing. His first significant success came in 1920 with “Margie,” marking the beginning of a prolific output that would eventually encompass hundreds of songs during Tin Pan Alley’s golden age.

Davis’s breakthrough as a major lyricist arrived in 1926 with “Baby Face,” which became a worldwide standard. His extraordinary productivity and commercial success continued unabated—he had 22 songs that sold a million copies or more, including hits like “Carolina Moon.” He seemed to crank out lyrics faster than the public could consume them, becoming one of the brightest luminaries of Tin Pan Alley from the 1920s through the 1950s.

In 1927, Davis expanded his work into theatrical productions, writing scores for Broadway shows including *Artists and Models* of 1927 and, most notably, *Sons o’ Guns* (which premiered in 1929).

THE COTTON CLUB YEARS (1936-1939)

Among Davis's many professional partnerships, his collaboration with composer J. Fred Coots proved particularly fruitful. Coots, like Davis, was a veteran of vaudeville who had transitioned to songwriting. Together, they created songs that captured the spirit of their era, blending Davis's gift for relatable, emotionally direct lyrics with Coots's melodic sophistication. Melody, swing rhythm, and class could define the talent of composer and lyricist paired as "Coots and Davis." Together, they contributed to three editions of the prestigious Cotton Club revues between 1936 and 1939 when the "Aristocrat of Harlem" moved to Manhattan. Their Cotton Club songbook included numerous memorable numbers (in bold are those recorded by Cab Calloway):

Cotton Club Parade, 27th edition (Sep 24, 1936-Mar 16, 1937):

"Doin' The Suzi-Q" • **"Copper Colored Gal"** • **"The Weddin' of Mister and Missus Swing"** • "Alabama Barbecue" • "I'm at the Mercy of Love" • "That's What You Mean to Me" • **"Frisco Flo"** • **"Hi De Ho Miracle Man."**

Cotton Club Parade, 3^d edition (Sep 24, 1937-Mar 6, 1938):

"Night Fall in Louisiana" • **"Go South Young Man"** • **"She's Tall She's Tan She's Terrific"** • **"Hi-De-Ho Romeo"** • "Harlem Bolero" • **"I'm Always in the Mood For You"** • "The Bill Robinson Walk" • **"Savage Rhythm."**

Cotton Club Parade, 5th edition (Oct 6, 1938-Mar 5, 1939):

"A Lesson in Jive" • "Picketing the Old Plantation" • **"Miss Hallelujah Brown"** • **"The Boogie-Woogie"** • **"I'm Madly in Love with You"** • "Highland Swing" • "Style" • **"There's a Sunny Side to Everything."**



These songs became integral to the Cotton Club's historical reputation for sophisticated, professionally crafted entertainment that bridged popular and jazz idioms. Of course, many of those were written especially for and performed by Cab Calloway. "Hi-De-Ho Miracle Man" became Cab's anthem in the mid-forties and was used in his 1947 movie, "Hi-De-Ho" (Josh Binney).



Manhattan's
Cotton Club,
1936

A NETWORK OF COLLABORATORS AND A GALAXY OF PERFORMERS

Throughout his career, Davis worked with an impressive roster of composers and fellow songwriters, demonstrating remarkable versatility in adapting his lyrical style to different musical personalities. His collaborators included Milton Ager, Harry Akst, Con Conrad, Nathaniel Shilkret, Billy Baskette, Arthur Swanstrom, Ted Murry, and J. Russell Robinson. This collaborative approach was typical of Tin Pan Alley's factory-like production methods, where lyricists and composers often worked in various combinations to meet the constant demand for new material. Innumerable artists covered and recorded his songs, and contemporary artists still do: Nat King Cole, Tom Jones, Little Richard, The Temptations, Connie Francis, Fats Domino, Frank Sinatra, Bobby Darin, Jan Garber, Al Jolson, Gene Austin, Duke Ellington, Peggy Lee, Thelonious Monk, Billie Holiday...

A MANY-TALENTED MAN: PERFORMER AND PRODUCER

During the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, Davis worked as a singer, dancer, and actor as well as a songwriter. But he became perhaps best known for his revues that featured old vaudeville stars and promised new talent. In his effort to develop young performers, he staged a number of revues on Broadway and took them on the road to other towns. He was given credit for the rise of entertainers such as Paul Whiteman, Ruby Keeler, Eleanor Powell, Martha Raye, etc.

His producing credits included headlining at the Palace Theatre in 1928, bringing "Future Broadway Stars" to Loew's State in 1933, and even writing for Chico Marx in 1944. This commitment to developing new talent became a defining aspect of Davis's career, extending his influence far beyond his own songwriting achievements.

Murray Weinger's **COTTON CLUB REVUE** **of 1957**

Written & Conceived by BENNY DAVIS

THE COTTON CLUB REVUE REVIVAL DEVELOPED BY DAVIS

Nearly two decades after his original Cotton Club work, Davis returned to the Cotton Club name in a remarkable late-career renaissance. When Miami cabaret owner Murray Weinger sought to resurrect the prestigious Cotton Club brand, Davis spent six months in secret preparation for what would become the Cotton Club Revue, working with Clarence Robinson.

This revival project represented a significant undertaking. Davis, by then 61 years old, brought his extensive expertise from the original Cotton Club era to create a modern interpretation of the classic revue format.

Cab Calloway was rapidly considered the headliner, even if the name of Della Reese was dropped in the press in September 1956. In October, the cast was around Cab Calloway, Sally Blair, and Jimmy Randolph (he will be part of the 1958 edition).

Just for the 1957 edition, Benny Davis wrote the whole book ([read our article about the songs of the revue](#)). The collaboration lasted until the last curtain call in the fall of 1959. It sort of endured with the new revue by Davis called "Harlem Heatwave" that toured Europe in 1960 with the very same acts and cast, and the notable absence of Cab Calloway!

ADVOCACY FOR PERFORMERS' RIGHTS

Davis was not only an ardent developer of new talent but also a staunch supporter of better working conditions for performers. To protect popular artists such as himself from the more exploitive aspects of show business, he became a charter member of both the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), which collects and distributes royalties paid on the publication and performance of songs, and the Friars Club of New York and Los Angeles, a fraternal organization of entertainers known for their charitable works and assistance to fellow artists.

LATER CAREER AND LEGACY

Davis continued composing, producing hits that kept him active in the industry well past the Tin Pan Alley era's decline. Songs like "Don't Break the Heart That Loves You," "There Goes My Heart," and "With These Hands" were covered numerous times by important vocalists through the mid-1960s, demonstrating the lasting appeal of his straightforward, heartfelt lyrical approach. His stature as a lyricist was certified in 1975 when he was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame alongside writers such as Sammy Cahn and Jule Styne. He spent his later years in Miami, Florida—the same city where he had masterminded the Cotton Club Revue revival in the 1950s.

Benny Davis died on December 20, 1979, at a North Miami nursing home at the age of 84. He had no kids with his wife, Gilda. “My songs are my children,” he told the journalist in his last interview in November 1978 for *Miami News*. In December 1957, seeing the success of the latest Cotton Club Revues, the producer Joe Pasternak had planned a movie on the life of Benny Davis. Nothing followed. However, his work bridged multiple generations of American entertainment, from the Jazz Age to the rock and roll era. His involvement with both the original Cotton Club and its 1950s revival made him a unique link between two golden ages of American show business, while his commitment to developing new talent and protecting performers’ rights extended his influence far beyond his own considerable achievements as one of Tin Pan Alley’s most successful and prolific lyricists.



Benny Davis, holding the most prized piece from his collection: a picture of him on the beach with young Irving Berlin. This is the last picture published in the press of the man who sold more than 20 million copies of sheet music. (Miami News, Nov. 27, 1978)

Murray Weinger's
COTTON CLUB REVUE
of 1957

Written & Conceived by BENNY DAVIS

Supervised by Mervyn Nelson

Dance Direction by Clarence Robinson

I. OVERTURE

conducted by Cab Calloway

II. "LIFE"

sung by Cab Calloway and The Orioles

danced by The Anjoel Trio

The Norma Miller Dancers

The Savar Dancers

and The Cotton Club Girls:

Yvonne Blanchard, Bobbie Day, Theodora Boyd,
Lea Mears, Del Boyd, Dee Dee Lynn, Barbara
Thomas, Marti Lane, Dolores Boyd, Leona Epae,
Roxy Young, Joan Myers

III. WILLIE GAINES

"Motion in High Gear"

IV. LONNIE SATTIN

"The Vocal Volcano"

V. JOE CHISOLM

"A Gentleman, His Hat and His Cane"

VI. "ROCK AND ROLL ROMEO"

Cab Calloway as Romeo

Norma Miller as Juliet

VII. "CALL OF THE WILD"

The Civilized Man.....	Lonnie Sattin
His Civilized Wife.....	Leona Epao
The Kidnapped Virgin.....	Terri Vann
Her Warrior Lover.....	André Pitts
The Watusi Queen.....	Norma Miller
The Watusi King.....	Stoney Marteeni
The Idol of Love.....	Sonny Til
The Witch Doctor.....	Joel Noble
The Queen's Dancers.....	Barbara Lauree, Terrie Harris, Priscilla Spencer The Savar Dancers
The Tribal Warriors.....	Billy Ricker, Charles Young, Raymond Scott
The King's Guards.....	Frank Todd, Gerald Rodreckus, Albert Russell, Billy Addams
The Maidens.....	The Cotton Club Girls

VIII. SALLIE BLAIR

"Sex with a Capital 'X' "
Assisted by The Orioles

IX. GEORGE KIRBY

"I Hope I Make an Impression"

X. CAB CALLOWAY

The King of "Hi De Ho"
"Evalina" Michelle Clark

XI. "DOIN' THE TOWN"

sung by The Orioles
danced by The Anjoel Trio, Norma Miller Dancers,
Savar Dancers and The Cotton Club Girls

XII. "REMEMBER THESE!" (Finale)

Cab Calloway introduces
George Kirby
Sallie Blair
Willie Gaines
Joe Chisolm
Lonnie Sattin
Michelle Clark
and the Entire Company

A NEW BAND WITH SOME OLD PALS

THE MUSICIANS OF THE REVUE



Cab Calloway rehearsing the band while Eddie Barefield, arranger and conductor of the orchestra, is seated on the left, checking if his work fits with the band he formed. This is the only photo we are aware of the musicians of the show (Ebony, March 1957)

According to The New York Age, Mercer Ellington and his orchestra would take care of the musical part (Oct. 6, 1956). Ultimately, Duke's son didn't join the project. Cab Calloway asked producer Murray Weinger to bring in his former saxophonist, Eddie Barefield. Barefield was then entrusted with the musical direction of the revue and led the big band.

Barefield was far from an unknown to Cab. In fact, he was an old friend of Calloway's, having joined his orchestra back in 1933. When Cab discovered him in Baltimore, he phoned Irving Mills and said, "I just found Benny Carter and Johnny Hodges all in one." Barefield was an immediate standout with the Calloway band and shined on wax with his solo on Moonglow (1933). He had left the band after filming The Singing Kid in 1936 and moved to the West Coast, with bassist Al Morgan to found his own orchestra. From 1951 and the sporadic reformation of his large band (especially for tours in South America and Cuba), Cab hired Eddie Barefield again. The latter remains his music director until the late '70s, alternating with pianist Danny Holgate.

At the time of the tour, Eddie Barefield is also a studio musician, especially for NBC-TV; he runs a Broadway pit orchestra (for A Streetcar named Desire); and he also gives saxophone lessons.

BAREFIELD, WEINGER AND THE OPENING NIGHT

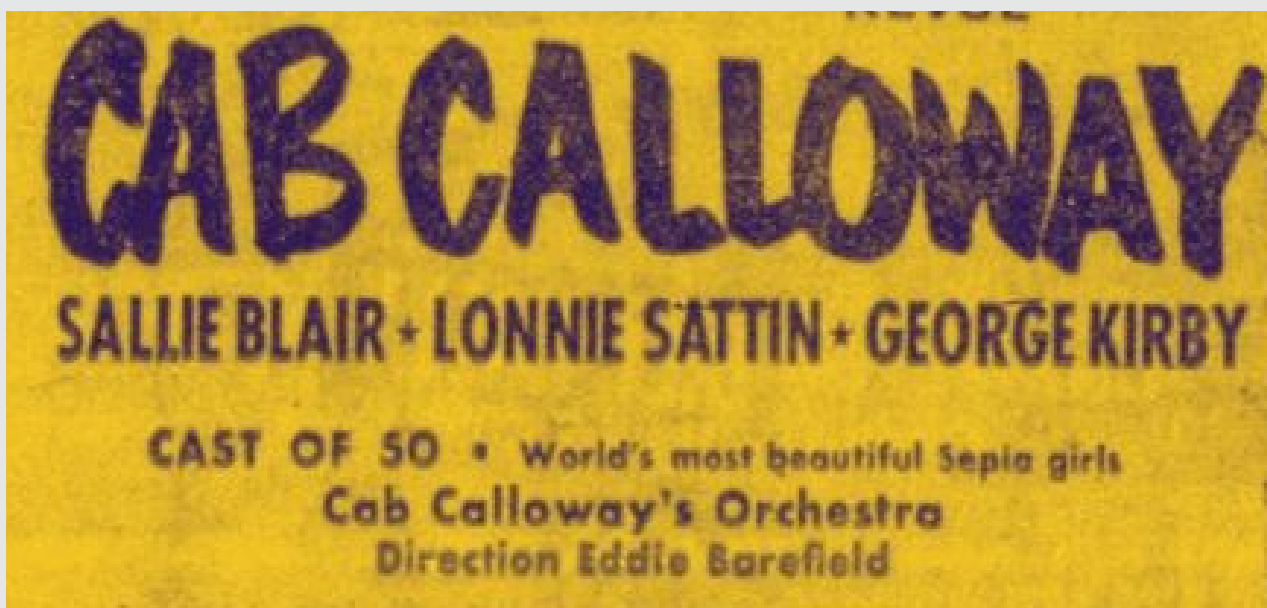
In a 1978 Jazz Oral History Project interview with Ira Gitler, Barefield had fond memories of producer Murray Weinger, saying: "This guy, he was a marvelous manager, and he made three or four fortunes. And he was a spender. He was a great money spender... He just wanted to know how much it would be. I said, 'Well, you've got to pay the guys that much, whatever the scale was.' And for myself, I'll go down, since I knew he was short of money." Barefield's idea was to write the arrangements, rehearse the band in Miami and go back to New York.

Barefield was firm on asking Weinger to pay the week's salary for the musicians' rehearsal. But he got too busy writing the arrangements to find time to rehearse the band. Calloway did.

Eddie perfectly recalls the circumstances of the opening night: "We go out there [the Beachcomber]. This was a big, barny, great big place, and the place was packed with people. And Cab was disgusted. He said to me, 'Put on a tuxedo and conduct the show.' I said, 'Well, I don't know what you've been doing. I just know the music. Just write me a routine of the show.' So I put on a tuxedo and went in there and conducted the show because everybody was so disgusted that we never did get through a dress rehearsal that day. When they ended the show, the audience was standing up screaming."

Eddie Barefield conducting (Cabaret, Aug 1957)





The day after, Barefield was ready to go back to New York, but Weinger insisted firmly that he stay there. “You did me a great favor, said Weinger. I’m going to make you rich. All you got to do now, stick with me.” Barefield reminisces about Murray Weinger’s hyperactivity: “This guy never went to bed. You go up to his room, and he had six or seven telephones all around his bed. He never went to sleep, calling—he had things in South America [a nightclub restaurant in the Dominican Republic], everywhere. He was really wild, and then he was renovating this building next door [Copa City], and he had big display windows of fur coats and mannequins and everything where he was going to put this show in. And he dropped dead. After, all the people that he had gotten money from started grabbing the show. But if he hadn’t died, I think that thing would have been one of the big things, and I think, as he said, he would have made me rich, because when the payday came, they paid all the band off.” Barefield ended with a very honorable check of \$4,000 (= \$45,500 of today)

When the revue broke in July 1957, Eddie Barefield went back to New York, doing several gigs around, and mostly resting and counting his money! Eddie Barefield came back to Miami when the next season of The Cotton Club Revue started. He will remain until the last curtain call of the show. In 1960, he was the musical director for the famous “Jazz Train” production, including a tour of Europe.



*Eddie Barefield photographed in 1951
by 'William Popsie' Randolph*

Who's Who of the stage orchestra

Naturally, many of Cab's former bandmates were on the bandstand... Also, thanks to his pedigree and his recent work as a conductor in Broadway pits, staff musician for NBC or ABC, Eddie had many connections. In an interview with British jazz journalist Albert J. McCarthy for *Jazz Monthly* (done in February 1959, and published in May 1959), Barefield explains, "The main trouble at present is the people handling the music business. They are all for cutting down on the expenses and are not interested in big bands. (...) There is a tremendous amount of real talent lost to music at present because of the situation that exists. I think that Hilton Jefferson (former Calloway section mate with Barefield) is one of the greatest alto players in jazz, both as a lead man and soloist, and yet he is forced to work in a bank to exist."

And remember that Eddie Barefield created his own orchestra in Hollywood in 1936! Plus, in March 1956, he formed a "15-piece band [that used] 30-member alumni group as a talent pool... Well known and loved names represented are Andrew Brown, Walter Thomas, Chauncey Haughton, Hilton Jefferson, Garvin Bushell, Sam (The Man) Taylor, Lamarr (sic for Lammar) Wright, Irving Randolph, Paul Webster Dupreist Wheeler (sic for DePriest), Tyree Glenn, George Matthews and Al (Doc Cheatham)" (*The Afro-American*, March 31, 1956).

So, you can expect Eddie Barefield to have chosen the right musicians for the band, consisting of "3 trumpets, 1 trombone, 4 saxes, 3 rhythm." Unfortunately, he provides no names, and, according to various sources and testimonies, we can assume that the stage orchestra is almost the same as the one lineup for the recording sessions for the *Gone* album in November and December 1957.

Trumpet section of 3:

2 former Calloway musicians:

- **Lammar WRIGHT (1905-1973)** began working with Cab Calloway's band as early as his time with the Missourians! He was a key trumpeter of the early jazz and swing eras. After rising to prominence with Bennie Moten's band, he joined The Missourians. After Calloway's raid, he remained with him until 1944. He joined Cab's 1951-52 South America touring orchestra. Wright's searing and powerful solos were a defining feature of Calloway's faithful iconic sound for over two decades, and even in the sixties when he backed the king of Hi de ho in Atlantic City. His son, Lammar Wright, Jr, also worked with Cab (in the movie "Hi-De-Ho," 1947)!



- **Johnny LETMAN (1917-1992).** A master of the mainstream jazz trumpet, a reliable sideman Cab already appreciated in the mid-forties (and for the 1947 movie "Hi-De-Ho"), Letman forged a long and productive career (Nat King Cole, Horace Henderson, Lucky Millinder, Count Basie...), even if he never quite achieved widespread fame. Known for a big, swinging sound that echoed the influence of Louis Armstrong and Roy Eldridge, Letman's playing was characterized by a powerful attack, a wide range, and a knack for the blues. Perfect for the show! In the latter half of his career, he found steady work as a studio musician, on television, and in Broadway shows, while also leading his own combos.

- Barefield added the young **Herbie JONES (1926-2001)**. Born in Miami, he left for New York, to join Lucky Millinder band. He went on with Andy Kirk, Buddy Johnson before being hired by Barefield for the Cotton Club Revue. Duke Ellington will be his next big boss in 1963, where he sometimes leads the trumpet section. Esteemed by the Duke, he even contributed to the first two Concerts of Sacred Music.



Trombone section of 1:



- **Henderson CHAMBERS (1908-1967)** was a versatile jazz trombonist from Louisiana who worked with major bandleaders including Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, and Duke Ellington. His multi-instrumental skills made him a respected and sought-after sideman throughout the 1930s-50s. His seasoned sound was the perfect contribution to the nostalgic performances of Calloway's Cotton Club Revue.

or

- **Elmer 'Klinkertop' CRUMBLEY (1908-1993)**. Born in Oklahoma, Crumbley became a respected swing-era trombonist, spending 13 years with Jimmie Lunceford. His smooth tone, plunger work inspired by Tricky Sam Nanton, and reliable section work made him valuable to bandleaders. When Barefield hired him, Crumbley helped recreate the classic big band sound.



Reeds section of 4:

- **Chauncey HAUGHTON (1909-1989)**, alto saxophone, who's the only musician to have played under the baton of 3 Calloways: Elmer, Blanche, and Cab, but he never got a chance to shine with a featured solo! After leaving Cab's band, Haughton played with various orchestras, including Chick Webb, Ellington, and served in the army during WWII, touring Europe with Don Redman's orchestra until 1947. After a brief reunion with Calloway in 1951-1952, Haughton came out of retirement for one final collaboration in 1958. Drafted by Barefield, he joined the Cotton Club Revue performances for at least two seasons, including the album for Gone Records. This marked his last professional appearance before permanently retiring.



In Europe, in 1946 touring with Don Redman.



In 944, with Benny Carter

- **Willard BROWN (1909-1967)**, baritone sax. Born in Alabama, he established himself in Chicago's jazz scene in the '20s, working with leaders like Tiny Parham and Louis Armstrong. After moving to New York and playing with various bands, like Benny Carter's through the '40s, Brown later joined Lucky Millinder before being part of the Cotton Club Revue with Cab Calloway, "wiggling out as he had never before," as Eugene Chadbourne wrote.

- **Maurice 'James' SIMON (1929-2019)**, tenor sax: was a Houston-born tenor saxophonist who recorded early in his career with Russell Jacquet's band in 1945, alongside notable musicians like Teddy Edwards and Charles Mingus. Powerful, solid, and typical of those honking saxophonists, Maurice could take any solo and have the rugs burnt by dancers, as in his "Nightfall" record.

- **Bobby GREENE**, tenor sax. His career is obscure to us, even if he recorded with Erskine Hawkins, and under his own name. Greene brought his robust, reliable tenor saxophone style that fits with Barefield's big band arrangements.

Rhythm section of 3 (possibly):

- **Raymond Tunia (1916-1983)** was a versatile pianist in the jazz and R&B worlds. Known for his work as both a sideman and an arranger, Tunia played with a wide range of artists, including Lucky Millinder, Pearl Bailey, and Sister Rosetta Tharpe. His most notable associations were with JATP and Ella Fitzgerald, whom he accompanied on multiple tours and served as a musical director, and with Cab Calloway, where he performed as part of the Calloway/Eddie Barefield combo in the late fifties.

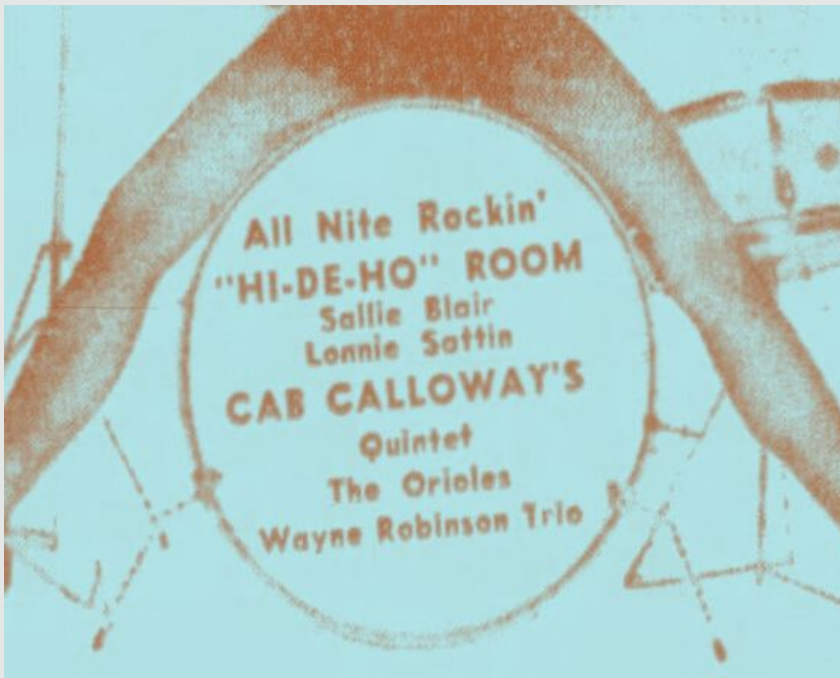
- **Herman Wright (1932-1997)**, on bass, was the youngest guy who joined the revue in Miami season. Initially a drummer, he switched to the upright bass and became a fixture on the New York City jazz scene after moving there in 1960. Wright's long and productive career saw him collaborate with a diverse range of artists, including Dorothy Ashby, Yusef Lateef, and George Shearing... and Cab Calloway! He was a versatile player, a dependable and skilled sideman and he never led a major orchestra of his own.

- **Solomon 'Sol' Hall (?-ca1969)**, was a Florida-born drummer, and a familiar figure at the Metropole with Henry Allen's Band. Active primarily in the 1940s, he has worked with Hal Singer, Johnny Hodges, Sy Oliver. He recorded with Doc Wheeler's Sunset Orchestra on Bluebird in 1942, "Tunie's Tune"—a tune named after pianist Raymond Tunia. He was a member of Hot Lips Page's small combos from 1943 into the late 1940s, appearing on recordings for the Savoy, King, and Columbia labels. These sessions, alongside Page and other musicians like Wynonie Harris, and Earl Bostic, solidify his place in the hot jazz and R&B scenes of the time. He worked again in 1962 with Eddie Barefield, recording two LPs with him devoted to Edgar Battle.

Nevertheless, for the stage orchestra, dancer DeeDee Lynn remembers other names: **Michael SILVER** on drums and **Frank ORANGE** on piano. The latter will become Sammy Davis Jr.'s drummer.

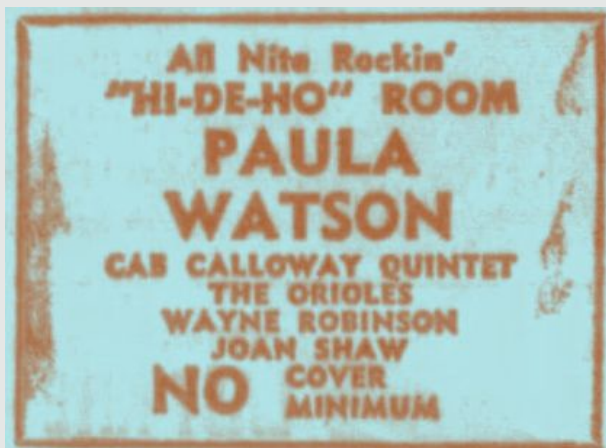
Note that Lammar Wright is the only musician in the band ever mentioned in the press during this season—and the others! If Eddie Barefield was careful about his men, the journalists never cared much about: they didn't wear feathers like the chorus girls...

ALL NITE ROCKIN' IN THE HI-DE-HO ROOM



Portion of an ad from the Miami Herald early in the Revue's run

Inside the Miami area newspaper advertisements for the Cotton Club Revue was a small box promoting “all nite rockin’” in the back room of the club, called the “Hi-De-Ho Room.” The room was smaller and more intimate than the main showroom, similar to the “lounges” in the Las Vegas hotels. There, in the early morning hours after the main show, members of the band and other performers put on an informal late show surely designed to keep the patrons drinking. The extra session started off presenting Sallie Blair and Lonnie Sattin along with the Cab Calloway Quintet, the Orioles, and the Wayne Robinson Trio.



Later, a stream of other performers replaced the main stars of the Revue in the Hi-De-Ho Room. **Paula Watson** was the biggest name, playing the room starting in January 1957.

Born Pauline Mazeppa Henry in Mobile, Alabama, Paula Watson (1927-2003) was a jazz pianist and R&B singer. Her first recording was 1948’s “A Little Bird Told Me,” released on a small R&B label, Supreme Records (founded by Albert Patrick, a dentist).



Her song was popular, rising on the R&B charts to #6 and making Watson a bankable performer almost instantly. Within weeks, however, Watson's recording was copied almost note for note by a white singer, Evelyn Knight, on a major label, Decca. That record was a number 1 hit on the pop charts. Watson and Supreme sued Decca, claiming that Decca and Knight had copied their recording exactly. "While they could not claim copyright of the song, they felt comfortable they could claim rights to the arrangement of the song. When the case went to trial in 1950, the courts sided with Decca - you cannot copyright an arrangement." (Simone Whitlow, historyandimagination.com)

Consequently, the inability to stop copycat recordings became a familiar plight that happened to many Black artists in the early rock and roll era - Little Richard vs. Pat Boone, Big Mama Thornton vs. Elvis Presley. After the lawsuit, Supreme Records went out of business. Paula Watson later moved to MGM and Decca for jazz-oriented recordings, including fine cuts with backing by saxophonist Jerry Jerome, and former Cab Calloway musicians, Milt Hinton and Sam 'the Man' Taylor. Paula Watson later moved to Europe and worked steadily through the 1990s.

The members of the **Cab Calloway Quintet** have not been identified, but would have included some of the younger members of the full band, or whoever wasn't tired each night. The exact lineup probably changed often during the run of the Revue.



Wayne Robinson when he was drumming with the Treniers.

The Wayne Robinson Trio was led by Wayne Robinson, a drummer who played with the R&B group the Treniers and soon joined Lionel Hampton's band touring through the 1960s.



"ABC-Paramount recording favorite Joan Shaw is a highlight of the entertainment in the Cotton Club Hi-De-Ho room." (Miami News, Feb 16, 1957)

Joan Shaw, a singer popular in New York and Miami clubs, opened at the Hi-De-Ho Room in January 1957 and stayed about a month.

The Premiers, another doo-wop group (their song "My Darling" was a hit in 1956) passed through for apparently just one show in January. Perhaps the Orioles took the night off.



The Orioles moved up to top billing after Paula Watson left

When Paula Watson left after March 13, Florida musician **Rufus Beacham** (misspelled Beecham in the ads) joined for just three days, gone by March 17. His claim to fame? In 1950, one member of his R&B band, the **Tampa Toppers**, shot and killed another member of the band in a highly publicized case.



Rufus Beacham

Fred Owens, was in the Hi-De-Ho Room for just one night, March 18. We have not been able to uncover his particular talent.

And finally, **Wendell Mason** joined the after-hours crew. He was described by a reviewer as a "happy-go-lucky pianist and vocalist." He played the Hi-De-Ho Room from March 19 until the revue closed on April 12, 1957.



\$35,000 OUT OF THE POCKET!

THE COTTON CLUB'S ROBBERY



Montage of several articles reporting the event.

The Cotton Club robbery which occurred on January 7th, 1957 is a fascinating piece of Miami Beach nightclub history – the drama of masked bandits using Federal Reserve bank bags as disguises really does read like something out of a crime novel! Hence, we decided to report it in a sensationalist way, as journalists of those days did...

MASKED BANDIT'S STRIKE GOLD AT MIAMI'S SWANKIEST NIGHTSPOT!

\$35,000 Vanishes in Dawn Raid as Cab Calloway's Money Goes Missing

In the pre-dawn darkness of January 7th, 1957, Miami Beach's Cotton Club became the scene of one of the most audacious heists in South Florida history. Four masked bandits, their faces hidden behind canvas money bags stamped "Federal Reserve Bank of Jacksonville," made off with \$35,000 from the legendary nightspot.

The victims were club owner George Weinger, 43, and stage manager Jerry Hirsch, 46, who had simply stepped out for coffee at Wolfie's restaurant on Lincoln Road. Returning at 6 a.m., they walked straight into a nightmare that would leave them bound, gagged, and devastated.



CAB CALLOWAY:

THE UNWITTING VICTIM

The most high-profile casualty wasn't even present during the crime. Legendary bandleader Cab Calloway, the "Hi-De-Hi-De-Ho" man himself, was currently headlining at the Miami Beach nightclub when masked bandits made off with \$6,000 of his personal money. The cash had been entrusted to the club's safe for safekeeping during his engagement. While Calloway dazzled audiences night after night, he had no idea criminals were plotting to steal his hard-earned money. For the man who had conquered Harlem's original Cotton Club, this Miami Beach robbery became an unwelcome footnote in his illustrious career.

TERROR IN THE SHADOWS

The robbers' disguises were chilling: white cotton gloves and canvas money bags over their heads with eye-holes cut out. "I felt a gun at my head and a voice said, 'don't move,'" Weinger later told police. The bandits forced Hirsch to open the safe while tying up Weinger with cords from venetian blinds.

Inside that safe lay the weekend's receipts—\$29,000 from three nights of packed shows, plus Calloway's \$6,000. The thieves even rifled through the victims' pockets, taking an additional \$570.

THE AFTERMATH

The Cotton Club, formerly the Beachcomber, represented owner George Weinger's dreams of creating Miami Beach's premier entertainment venue. In one cruel hour, years of investment vanished. Tragically, George's brother Murray, the producer, would die of a heart attack days after the robbery—some whispered the shock contributed to his death.

The bandits remain at large, their \$35,000 haul (worth over \$300,000 today) vanished without a trace, leaving this brazen crime as one of Miami Beach's most shocking unsolved mysteries.



FEBRUARY 1957



"Chorus Lesson:
Adding a hefty note at a gag
chorus practice session at
Miami's Sir John Hotel, singing
star Cab Calloway exhibits his
technique with Cotton Club
dancers, Joan Myers (l.) and
Dee Dee Lynn. Cab is a smash
hit at the Miami Beach Cotton
Club show spot."
JET, February 1957

LeRoy Jeffries

FEBRUARY 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

1-28 (8:45 and 11:15 pm – 3rd show on Saturday)

The Cotton Club Revue, Copa City, Miami, FL

3 (3:00 am)

Appears with the Cotton Club Revue as special guests for the show, Café Society, Miami, FL

5

Heads the entertainment, Combined Jewish Appeal Sponsor's tea, Miami, FL

?? (beg before 16)

Cab flies from Miami to New York and back the same day, to close a real estate deal (in Miami News, Feb 16, 1957)

8

Guest (along with June Christy, Tennessee Ernie Fords, The Mitchell Boys' Choir) of The Floor Show TV show, CHCH?

17

Miami Beach Police and Firemen's 8th annual Night of Stars, along with Nat King Cole, Olsen & Johnson, and many others, Miami Beach Dog Track, Miami, FL

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND . . .
APPEARING NITELY AT
CAFE SOCIETY
CHARLES A. TAYLOR'S
**BRONZE MANIKINS
REVUE**
A Miniature Cotton Club Revue—Starring
AUDREY JUNE
Super Circus TV Star
WITH A CAST OF 19
Featuring
ARDITH, The Body . . . and her
Tall - Tan and Shapely Girls
EXTRA ADDED ATTRACTION
ODELL ST. JOHN
Sensational Song Stylist
Charles Calloway, M. C.
Music by
**BUDDY CLARK, His Drums
and His Orchestra**
3 Shows Nitely—Saturday and Sunday—11 p.m. - 1 a.m. and 3 a.m.
2 Shows—Monday through Thursday—11 p.m. and 2 a.m.
ADM. - Fri., Sat. & Sun.—75c - Mon., Thur.—60c tax incl.
For table reservations phone FR 9-9279. Ask for your congenial host
Jimmy "Salt Pork" Reeves
SPECIAL ATTRACTION:
The entire cast of the Cotton Club Revue will appear as guests of Cafe
Society at the 3 a.m. show—this Friday nite—Come out and meet the
stars of the Cotton Club.

*Charles—not Cab!—
Calloway conducts the
revue where the entire
cast of The Cotton Club
Revue appears at the
3 am show
(The Miami Times,
Feb 2, 1957).*

Cab's revue smashes Miami club record

MIAMI (ANP)—"The hottest Miami Beach nightclub show in a decade" that's what local scribes and Beachites are calling the new Cotton Club Revue of 1957, now in its sixth week on the site of the world famous Beachcomber in that city.

In the last ten days alone, the Club was visited by more than thirty thousand Florida vacationers; some back for their second and third visit.

The revue is headlined by Cab Calloway, Sallie Blair and Lonnie Sattin; staged by Benny Davis and Murvyn Nelson with dance direction by Clarence Robinson.

The package will run until late April at which time it will tour various theatres and cafes all over the country.

CJA Slates Tea

Entertainer Cab Calloway will headline the entertainment program at the Combined Jewish Appeal Sponsor's tea on Feb. 5.

Mrs. George Goldberg and Mrs. Samuel Lipton, co-chairmen, said the event will be at the home of Mrs. Leo Gerngross, 4549 Pine Tree Dr., Miami Beach.

The Miami News,
Feb 11, 1957

Top Stars To Aid In Telethon Here

Bert Parks, Julia Meade
Picked To MC Show

CBS' Bert Parks and Julia Meade will be master and mistress of ceremonies for the WTVJ Crusade for Children Telethon, to be telecast for 16 continuous hours from the Miami Beach Auditorium March 2 and 3, Telethon officials announced today.

The "new idea in telethons" will also feature live appearances of Carmen Cavallero, Cab Calloway, Gloria De Haven, the Vagabonds, Olsen and Johnson, Captain Kangaroo, Sky King, Charlie Spivak, Lonnie Sattin, Sally Blair, George Kirby, Marion Colby and Pupi Campo.

telethon of its kind in South Florida that will bring benefit to all worthy children's charities.

WTVJ has announced it will make a donation of all its equipment, personnel and air-time to the Telethon.

The Afro American, Feb 2, 1957

Miami News, Feb 20, 1957

*The way the photographic bug is biting big name musicians. At Miami's Sir John Hotel, \$600 Contax and Leica cameras were a dime a dozen around the necks of Count Basie, Joe Williams, Cab Calloway and Lonnie Sattin as they strutted around the pool.

JET, Feb 7, 1957

Walter Winchell In New York

The Cotton Club Show (Miami Beach), a terrific crowd-getter—may start a new trend in cafes offering girl-shows ... The \$4.50 minimum can be used for beverages or food. The latter consists of chicken or barbecued spare ribs (or a portion of both), a dash of cole slaw, coffee, tea or milk plus ice cream. No salad. no sea food. No silverware. No tablecloth. Real napkin because "paper ones cost just as much" says landlord George Weinger. His laundry bills are "nothing" ... His swiftly paced one hour and 45 minutes show (starring Calloway) costs only \$12,000 a week... A cast of 40 ... "I can't buy any name act for that money these days!" he punch-lined. "Too many acts forced us into this new

gold mine. We couldn't afford to give them their astronomic salaries!" ... Translation: One of the top spots in show business is gone for "stars," who outpriced themselves out of a Miami holiday.

The Panama American,
Feb 7, 1957

The Indianapolis News, Feb 21, 1957

DOROTHY KILGALLEN

Cotton Club Revue May Move North

NEW YORK—Broadway hears that Abe Ellis, the wealthy night-club concessionaire, may take over a New York cafe for a presentation of Miami's Cotton Club revue.

“THE FLOOR IS YOURS”

CLARENCE ROBINSON: THE STAGE ARCHITECT



Ebony, May 1957

Clarence Robinson (1900-1979) was the stage producer of The Cotton Club Revue of 1957, working alongside composer Benny Davis and producer Murray Weinger. Robinson built his career as a choreographer and producer across the major entertainment venues of Harlem and Manhattan from the 1920s through the 1970s. His work shaped the visual presentation of African American performers during the golden age of jazz clubs and variety theaters, repeatedly crossing paths with Cab Calloway.



Clarence Robinson and Bert Adams, billed as "Bert & Adams" (1921)

A DUO AND A FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH CALLOWAY... BLANCHE

Born in Philadelphia, Robinson began performing in 1917 at the Chicago-Bean Theatre. His first major production was in "Darktown Follies" at Luna Park in Coney Island. He later formed a dancing-singing-piano-playing act with Bert Adams. The "Adams & Robinson" duo was billed as "Jiggly hands and jazz feet" In June 1922, they appeared in "Belles of Cairo" at the New Paradise Roof on Broadway, produced by Miller & Lyles and Noble & Sissle, alongside Blanche Calloway.

After Adams was shot to death in 1924 by a jealous husband, Robinson partnered with his cousin Johnny Vigal until 1927. He appeared in all-black musicals like "Lucky Sambo" (1925) and "Keep Shufflin'" (1929), while also teaching Louise Groody ("No, No Nanette") to dance during "Hit the Deck."

Robinson progressively moved into stage production, serving as assistant to Leonard Harper, the master choreographer and stage producer for African American revues. Robinson studied white producers like Flo Ziegfeld and George White, developing expertise in adapting vernacular African American dance forms for theatrical presentation.

Clarence Robinson rehearsing with the girls at the Cotton Club on 48th Street and Broadway (1936)

THE COTTON CLUB YEARS

Robinson's relationship with the Cotton Club management started poorly. In February 1926, the venue sued Robinson and Vigal for \$10,000 for breach of contract after they accepted higher pay at Club Alabam. In 1927, when the Cotton Club hired Duke Ellington away from Robinson's Philadelphia show, underworld figure Boo Boo Hoff's emissary warned Robinson: "Be big, or you'll be dead." Robinson quickly released the band.

Despite these conflicts, Robinson became the Cotton Club's house choreographer, developing staging techniques that emphasized precision and visual spectacle. Walter Winchell noted in 1930 that Robinson's routines were "intricate and difficult" arrangements featuring "well-trained terpsichorines" performing "rapid-fire jungle movements." Robinson gained a reputation as a demanding choreographer who produced shows throughout New York. In 1932, he opened Yeah Man, a renowned nightclub on Seventh Avenue and 138th Street.

Robinson's approach often featured glamorous outfits and sophisticated staging that presented African American performers with dignity. However, the Cotton Club's Deep South aesthetic required stereotypical costumes and "wild Africa" scenes—a problematic leitmotif in nightclubs with African American performers. In 1936, Billy Rowe called Robinson "The glorifier of the American Colored Girl," and he was dubbed "the Ziegfeld of the race."

Robinson created popular dance novelties including the "Truckin'," "Suzy-Q," and "Skrontch." His first collaboration with Benny Davis came in 1936 for the downtown Cotton Club opening, producing such a sensational success that Paramount considered filming it.





WORKING WITH CALLOWAY... CAB

For nearly 15 years, Robinson's work frequently intersected with Cab Calloway's performances. In March 1930, Robinson staged "Jungle Drums" at the Plantation Club, featuring Calloway and the Missourians. "Japanese Fantasy" at the Lafayette Theatre followed, running six weeks with Robinson's staging. This pattern continued throughout the thirties and mid-forties as both men worked the same entertainment circuit—the Cotton Club, Apollo Theater, and later the Café Zanzibar.

Adelaide Hall's biographer described Robinson's methods during "Dance Mania" (1927): "By all accounts, the show's producer, Clarence Robinson, was a master of many disguises. He dipped his hand into every aspect of the show, from its conception through to the finished product. The cast found Robinson a nightmare to work for but his vision assured the theater management the top results they expected."

"Stormy Weather" (1943): the lavish finale with 40 dancers, Bill Robinson, Lena Horne, and Cab Calloway, like in the good old times of the Cotton Club...

APOLLO THEATER AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT

When Frank Schiffman reopened the Apollo Theater in 1935, Robinson served as house producer and choreographer until 1937, then again from 1938 to 1940. His creation (with Ralph Cooper) of "Audition Night" evolved into the famous "Amateur Night" still offered today. Schiffman praised Robinson's "fine eye for beauty and colors" and his ability to stage "some of the finest revues in Harlem." However, Ralph Cooper later revealed that Robinson was caught stealing ten dollars from each chorus girl's pay envelope.

INTERNATIONAL WORK AND "STORMY WEATHER"

Robinson regularly traveled to Europe, importing the latest show business trends. He toured with "Black Birds" starring Florence Mills in 1926, achieving phenomenal success. In 1933, he took a Cotton Club revue to Paris (canceled before opening) and London. He returned to Paris and England in 1937 with a new Cotton Club revue and Teddy Hill's orchestra, followed by successful shows in Cuba and Argentina in 1938.

In 1943, Robinson was credited as dance director for "Stormy Weather," becoming the first African American to handle primary direction of dancers in a major Hollywood production.



CHANGE OF PACE AND THE 1957 COTTON CLUB REVUE

By the 1950s, Robinson produced shows capitalizing on nostalgia for the jazz age, including television work with NBC in 1951 and the May 1955 opening of the Moulin Rouge in Las Vegas—the first interracial resort. However, his Vegas show disappointed the African American press for its “Can Can” style that erased the Harlemit spirit. When *Variety* reviewed the new Cotton Club Revue in New York, it called it “overmatched, outdated,” noting that “Negro entertainment in particular has come a long way since Clarence Robinson first produced Cotton Club shows in its vintage era.” Yet recreating 1930s glamour was precisely the producers’ goal. However, Clarence Robinson put a lot of himself into this show. He was on the founding team, along with producer Murray Weinger and lyricist Benny Davis. Like during the heyday, Clarence Robinson got involved in scouting all the artists for the forthcoming project. Yet, note that the production was staged and conceived by Benny Davis, supervised by Mervyn Nelson, with Clarence Robinson being only in charge of the choreography. But times had changed: “What has happened to them? What forces spelled the doom of the professional chorine as a show business institution? For, today, she is a nightlife rarity on a par with the nickel beer, a species fast becoming as obsolete as the iceman” wrote Luther Hill in 1955 for *The Chicago Defender*. Our article about the chorus girls explains the process of casting them for this revue.

This Cotton Club production drew on Robinson’s decades of experience in staging variety shows, allowing him to recreate the visual elements that had made the original Cotton Club famous. Chorus girl Audrey June Taylor remembers: “Clarence Robinson was considered the senior choreographer. Although Mr. Robinson no longer danced or choreographed, he had been part of the 1930’s Cotton Club in Harlem. For that reason, Robinson assisted Joel [Noble] in keeping the choreography true to the original routines. With that accomplished, Mervyn [Nelson] as director pulled everything together.”

Note that the 1958 Cotton Club Revue will be staged by Lee Sherman and the 1959 one by Joel Noble, but Clarence Robinson will produce it.

THE STAGE ARCHITECT’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO AMERICAN THEATER

Robinson’s choreographic work helped establish visual standards for variety entertainment that influenced both nightclub and television presentation. His techniques for staging large groups, creating rapid costume changes, and adapting dance styles became industry standards. His approach to talent development at the Apollo created a model emphasizing both individual performer development and ensemble staging.

In 1951, Robinson wrote: “Show business is in my blood and its greatest personalities were often my closest companions. I take particular pride in being able to remember these show business greats in another way. I helped in a humble way to bring some of them to stardom.”

Robinson’s wife was **Hyacinth Curtis**, a dancer he met in the early twenties. After a violent 1927 dispute where he attacked her and destroyed her costumes, they reconciled and married. She became a Cotton Club chorus girl and later the president of the Cotton Club Girls association, surviving until 2004 at age 102.

Robinson died in 1979 after working continuously in entertainment production for over fifty years. His choreographic innovations during the 1920s and 1930s helped define the visual language of American variety entertainment during a crucial period of cultural development.

Unpredictably, Robinson’s last collaboration with Calloway occurred on December 16, 1974, in “The Cotton Club Returns to Broadway,” a tribute concert to Duke Ellington.



The full-length profile of
Clarence Robinson
is available at:
WWW.THEHIDEHOBLOG.COM



FAMILY MATTERS

BLANCHE CALLOWAY, ON TOUR WITH CAB



*Cab and Blanche together
while in Cuba
(The Havana Herald, April 29, 1951)*

In 1931, when Cab Calloway found fame, he took Blanche with him on tour for six months, offering her stage appearances on the same bill. In 1951, Cab stayed in Cuba for an extended engagement and took Blanche with him again to help Nuffie with their young daughters.

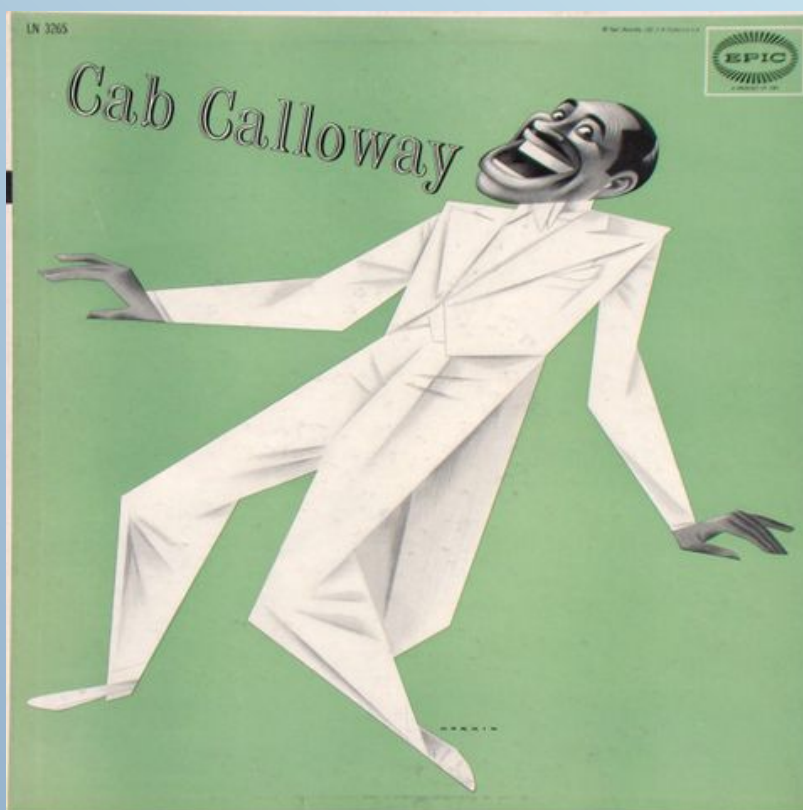
According to the June 29, 1957, edition of the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, Blanche Calloway has been staying with her brother Cab since February, helping out with the Cotton Club show. But now that it's closing on July 1 in Las Vegas, she's heading home to take care of some things..."

Joan Myers Brown, one of the Savar Girls who danced in the revue with Cab, perfectly remembers her presence alongside Cab and their real friendship.

What was her role during the tour? Was she taking care of her little brother? Was she sent by Cab's wife, Nuffie, to ensure that Cab wouldn't succumb to the charms of any chorus girl in Miami or Vegas? Nobody knows, but it would have been a tremendous spectacle to see the two siblings perform together on the same stage.

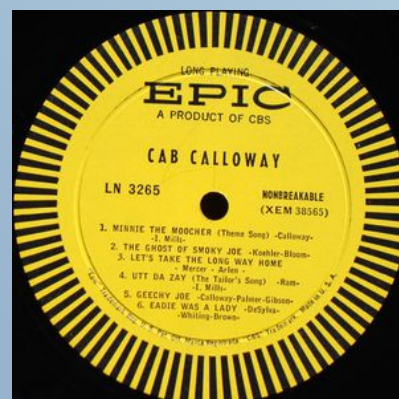
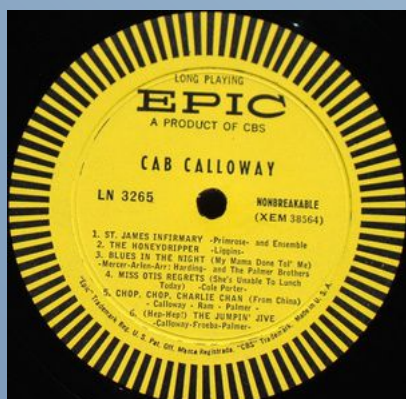
RECORD REVIEW

FOR FEBRUARY 1957



Released in September 1956, this wonderful EPIC album only gets a couple of lines as a review in *Down Beat*, dated February 7, 1957:

“Although of limited jazz value, there is much entertainment in Cab Calloway (Epic 12” LN 3265), 12 sides from 1932 to the late ’40s. There is a long discerning essay by Charles Edward Smith, the most penetrating history-analysis of Calloway ever written. Now, Epic, let’s have a Calloway jazz set from this same period.”



30 MN FROM HARLEM

THE WHITE PLAINS' DEN



Cab Calloway's home in White Plains on Knollwood Road (2008)

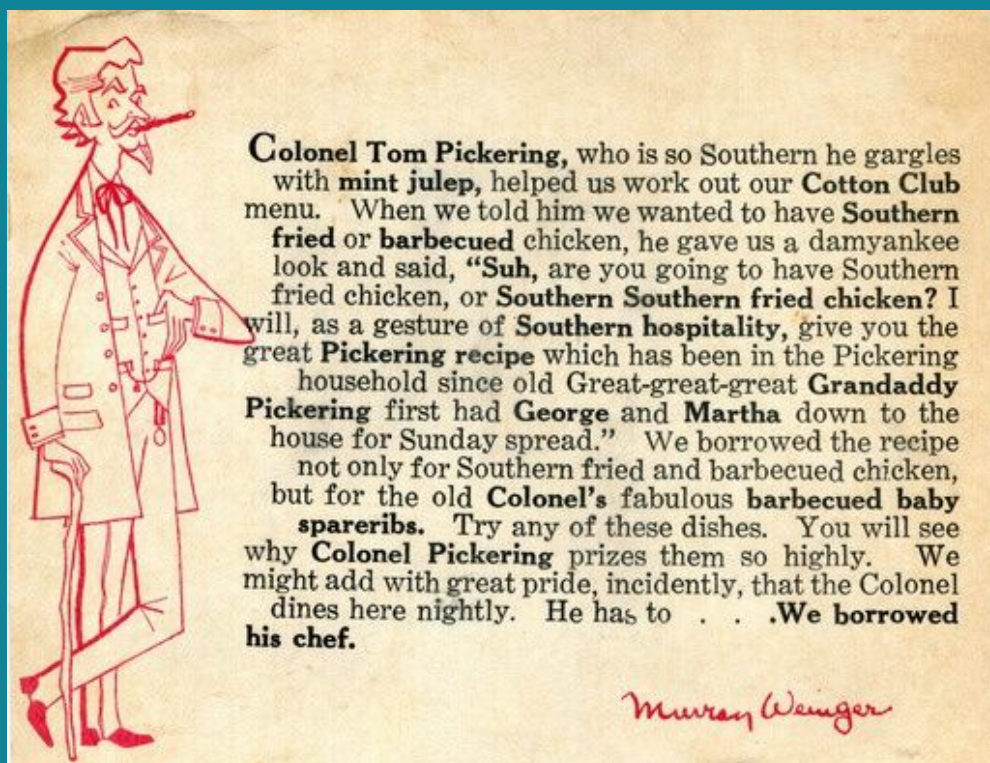
The rather good business with The Cotton Club Revue gives Cab the opportunity for a quick trip to New York, where he takes the keys to his new home in Westchester, early February 1957. It was conveniently located at 30 minutes by car from Harlem.

Alyn SHIPTON (erroneously writing that it was bought in 1956): “A large twelve-room white colonial-style home at 1040 Knollwood Road, in Greenburgh [in White Plains], Westchester County. This house, which had a basement den for Cab[']s poker games] and plenty of space for his family, was to be his home until his death, and it is where all three of his daughters from the marriage to Nuffie remember growing up. It was by far the largest, most prestigious home of any African American jazz musician of the time.”



To the invitation of Cecelia Calloway, we were lucky to stay at Cab Calloway's home in December 2008.





Would you fancy some Southern food?
 Menu from the Cotton Club, Miami, early 1957

MARCH 1957



"Shapely chorus girls kick up heels during fast-paces production number. Revue featured chorus of 12 beauties." (*Ebony*, May 1957)

MARCH 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

1-31 (8:45 and 11:15 pm – 3rd show on Saturday)

The Cotton Club Revue, Copa City, Miami, FL

2 (10:30 pm-next day)

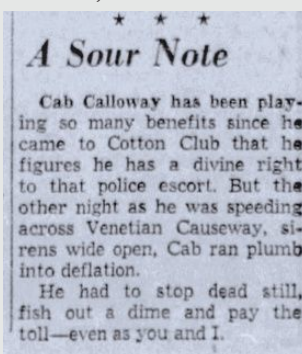
Appears along with Bob Keeshan, Kirby Grant, Carmen Cavallero, Lonnie Sattin (Bert Parks and Julia Meade MCs), Crusade Telethon, Miami, FL



CAB CALLOWAY star of the "Cotton Club Revue" currently playing in Miami is looking forward to Broadway. The man from the Nation's Capitol who became famous singing in the original Cotton Club has been sensational in Miami. Negotiations are underway to stage the revue on Broadway at the end of the Miami vacation season.

The New York Age,
NY, March 9, 1957

The Miami Herald, FL,
March 5, 1957



The Miami Times, FL,
March 2, 1957

Lebanon Daily News,
PA, March 21, 1957

**BIG BENEFIT SHOW
FOR 'CHILD WELFARE'**

**American Legion
John Griffin Post No. 165**

SPONSORS
SENSATIONAL ALL-STAR REVUE
With The Following Dazzling Array of Variety Talent

IN PERSON . . .

CAB CALLOWAY
"KING OF HI-DE-HO"

LONNIE SATTIN
NATION'S NEWEST "THRILL" SINGER
(Courtesy of Fabulous Cotton Club)

★ GEORGE KIRBY ★ PAULA WATSON
★ WILL GAINES

PLUS SUCH DIVERSIFIED ENTERTAINMENT AS

- Marion Powers ★ Andre D'Oraay & George Ruffin
- Bonnie Davis & Her Piccadilly Pipers with Clem Moorman ★ The 3 Jays
- Billy Horne Combo & Special Feature "Surprises"
- The Winnie Hoveler "Dancing Dolls"

HARRY ROGERS ORCHESTRA
David Tyler, Conductor

40 People Show • Added Celebrities

SUNDAY, MARCH 3rd
IN THE AFTERNOON—BEGINS AT 3 P.M.

Dade County Auditorium
West Flagler St. at 29th Avenue, Miami, Florida

Admission: \$1.75 — \$2.50 — \$3.50

TICKETS ON SALE AT:

General Headquarters: 3rd Ave. Realty, 1161 N.W. 3rd Ave., Mary Elizabeth Hotel, N.W. 2nd Ave.; Economy Drug Store, 11th St.; Community Drug Store, 16th Ave.; Sir John Health Center, Dade County Auditorium or Call FR 4-3297

Overlooked in the credits: Herman Hoveler, boss at Ciro's (H'wood), was the first to play The Cotton Club Revue, now the rage in Miami Beach and booked for the Royal Nevada (Vegas) starting Apr. 17th . . .

LET'S DANCE

NORMA MILLER AND HER DANCERS



The group of 12 dancers with its leader, front row left. Studio photo taken by Chicagoan photographer, Maurice Seymour who portrayed innumerable performers.

When dancer and choreographer Norma Miller died at age 99 in 2019, how did she consider her three-year stint with Cab Calloway between 1956 and 1959? Cab himself didn't even write a line about those Cotton Club Revues in his autobiography! Thanks to her book, *Swingin' at the Savoy*, Norma Miller shared a little more about her experience with her dancers in Miami, Vegas, and South America.

FROM THE LINDY HOPPERS...

Born in Harlem on December 2, 1919, Norma Miller discovered her passion for dance at the legendary Savoy Ballroom during the height of the Swing Era. By age twelve, she was already performing with Whitey's Lindy Hoppers, the renowned dance troupe that would help define swing dancing for generations to come. Miller's exceptional talent, infectious energy, and natural comedic timing quickly made her a standout performer. She danced alongside legends like Frankie Manning and appeared in several films during the 1930s and 1940s, including "A Day at the Races" (1937) with the Marx Brothers and, of course, "Hellzapoppin'" (1941). Her nickname, the 'Queen of Swing,' was well-earned through decades of dedication to the art form she helped pioneer.

... TO ROMEO AND JULIET!

The 1950s Cotton Club Revues marked a distinctive chapter in Miller's storied career. She took her first professional stab at comedy. In a skit based on Romeo and Juliet, she played Juliet opposite Cab Calloway's flamboyant 'Rock 'n' Roll Romeo.' The visual comedy was striking: Calloway entered carrying a guitar, wearing a short jacket, a large hat with colorful plumes, and bright yellow tights. Miller, positioned in a castle window above, nearly cracked up watching him perform. This number was one of the highlights of the revue and received rave reviews ([read p. 123](#)). And it started a parallel career for Norma, who, besides four Broadway shows, shared later TV appearances with Redd Fox (sitcom Sanford and Son), Richard Pryor, Moms Mabley, and many others. She even co-wrote the "Encyclopedia of Black Humor" with Redd Fox.

In the Cotton Club Revue, Norma also played the Watusi Queen in the "Call of the Wind" number that brought together the whole troupe and was a successful moment of the revue. "Virtually everybody hurled themselves into a Call of the Wild complete with torches, live chickens, Watusi gear, witch doctors, warriors, maidens, and plenty of good old-fashioned frenzy. Nor was the dance on this lively program confined only to those billed as dancers," noted a reviewer in *Dance Magazine* (August 1957).

In 1958, Norma would duet again with Cab for the song "Tzatskele." She got two big numbers in the 1959 edition with "Cool and Crazy" and "Waiting for Jane," when she sang and led the moment.

THE NORMA MILLER DANCERS

Having already established herself as a jazz dance pioneer, Miller had broken new ground by becoming one of the rare Black women to own and manage entertainment ventures.

Beginning in 1952, she formed her own performance companies—the Norma Miller Dancers, followed by the male-only group Norma Miller and her Jazzmen—groups she would lead on tours until 1968. The Norma Miller Dancers toured nationally with Count Basie for a year in 1954—they met George Kirby there and became friends. Her troupe of dancers also played an important role in the Cotton Club Revue.

Getting the names of Norma's 12 dancers is rather difficult, the programs being cursory.

Male dancers include:

- Norton 'Stoney' MARTEENI, Norma's partner for the famous 1948 Harvest Moon Ball dance contest. They earlier toured together in Australia, where Marteeni was caught by the fire curtain at the end of a number, and broke his ankle.
- Charles 'Chazz' YOUNG, Frankie Manning's son,
- Billy DOTSON,
- Billy RICKE, Norma's longtime dance partner,
- Raymond SCOTT (no connection with the composer).
- Joel NOBLE was part of the original Norma Miller Dancers. For the 1957 season, Joel choreographed the numbers (Clarence Robinson was the senior choreographer, [read p. 35](#)) and had his own trio as "Joel Noble trio."



Female dancers:

Possibly:

- Geri GRAY
- 'PUDGI'
- Priscilla RISHAD
- Barbara TAYLOR

In the program, the dancers contributed to "Doin' the Town" sung by The Orioles (in Miami, 1957) and several numbers and, of course, the finale.

SIX MORE DECADES TO DANCE!

After the Cotton Club years, Norma Miller continued to perform, teach, and advocate for swing dancing for six more decades. She became a living link to the golden age of the Savoy Ballroom, sharing her knowledge and passion with new generations of dancers. Through workshops, performances, and her writing, she ensured that the legacy of Lindy Hop and swing dancing would endure.

Norma Miller's three years with Cab Calloway and the Cotton Club Revues were just one chapter in an extraordinary life, but they exemplified her pioneering spirit, her artistic versatility through the language of dance.

Another pose by Seymour, with Norma Miller at the center of the composition, like any Queen of Swing would deserve.



FROM THE YOUNGEST IN THE REVUE

BACKSTAGE WITH MICHELLE CLARK



“

“LITTLE
MISS CLARK
HANDLES HERSELF
WITH ALL
THE APLOMB
OF A VET SOUBRETTE.”

—*Variety*

*Michelle Clark with Cab Calloway.
Ten years before, Cab already toured with
a promising child, Toni Harper.*

*“I learned so much about excellence and
professionalism on stage every night for
8 months. Truly a dynamic performer on
every level! My former boss, who many
times introduced me as his daughter,”
wrote Michelle/Shelly Clark in a 2022
Facebook post.*

Through the eyes of a little girl, the stage of a revue with dozens of artists, chorus girls, dancers, singers, and roadies is quite an adventure. But when the little girl is one of them, the feeling takes on a different quality: the kid will always remember the smell of the costumes, the perfume of the musicians, the warmth of backstage...

The little prodigy Michelle Clark was only 9 years old when she joined the cast of the Cotton Club Revue in October 1956. Her family, the tutor in charge of her during the tour, and even her “colleagues” took many pictures—snapshots of Michelle’s moments with the whole troupe and with the famous people who came to attend the show. Hence, accompanied by fond memories, those pictures tell the story of The Cotton Club Revue with an intimate, insider look that gives us the privilege of witnessing what life was like for African American artists performing in 1957.

Ready? Open your eyes wide!

STARTED AS A BROTHER-SISTER DUET

Born Mashelle Clark on July 27, 1947, in Brooklyn, Michelle (today called Shelly) is the younger sister of Elia, born in 1945. Together, they formed the duet billed as “The Clark Kids” when she was only four years old!

Her mother, Lilly Gainen-Clark, was Russian Jewish and had been a concert pianist. Her father, Edward Evans Clark from Barbados, had been a dancer, singer, and entertainer before becoming a cosmetics salesman.

As a variety duet, they appeared on stage and television, performing songs, dances, and pantomime skits. The Clark Kids were quickly noticed, as noted in *The New York Age* dated February 5, 1955: they “already have made veteran producers and critics sit up and look (and audiences stand up and cheer) during the past months.” But their big break happened thanks to the expiration of working permits for two Jamaican boys who had been performing in Pearl Bailey’s Broadway musical, “House of Flowers.” Having to return to their native Kingston, Michelle and Elia Clark assumed the roles starting April 4, 1955, for 8 months. *Ebony* magazine’s October 1955 issue devoted four pages with photos to the promising duet. After performing for a week in June 1955, the Clark Kids returned to the Apollo Theatre stage for a second time in October 1956: “Quite appealing,” “Very cute act. Went over very well,” commented Apollo’s manager, Frank Schiffman, in his booking cards.

In October 1956, the duet split: Elia had been signed to appear in MGM’s “Little Man, Big World” while Michelle got her big break with a contract for the Cotton Club Revue in Miami. Her mother Lilly would take care of Michelle and coach her during the Miami engagement and the tour. During her Miami stay, Michelle enrolled at Douglass Elementary School.

*Before they split for separate contracts
in Los Angeles and Miami,
with the choreographer
of the revue, Clarence Robinson.
(The New York Age, Dec 15, 1956)*



Elia and Michelle, the Clark Kids (Ebony, Oct 1955)



*Pearl Bailey with Elia and Michelle,
during the “House of Flowers” days (1955)*



X. CAB CALLOWAY
The King of "Hi De Ho"
"Evalina" Michelle Clark

XII. "REMEMBER THESE!" (Finale)
Cab Calloway introduces
George Kirby
Sallie Blair
Willie Gaines
Joe Chisolm
Lonnie Sartin
Michelle Clark
and the Entire Company

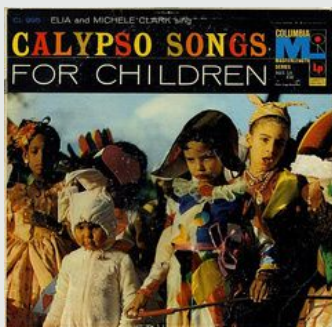
"EVALINA" AND MICHELLE, STARS OF THE SHOW

In the revue, Michelle sang her song "Evalina" at the end of the program and shared the stage with Cab Calloway. Michelle also joined the entire company for the finale performance of "Remember These!"

Most critics were fond of her instantly. Al Dunmore from The Pittsburgh Courier stated that Cab "dares to cope with show-stealing Michelle Clark, a mite from New York who really challenges Cab in the closing number that leads into the colorful, thrilling finale production numbers." Variety critic Lary called her a "clever moppet" who "handles herself with all the aplomb of a vet soubrette" (January 19, 1957), while a few months later at the Royal Nevada, the blasé reviewer Duke wrote, "a moppet-type youngster named Michele Clark does okay terping and chirping in a routine with Calloway which garners enthusiastic salvos" (April 24, 1957).

TWO BRIEF ESCAPES TO TV AND RECORD STUDIOS

Ironically, Michelle and her brother Elia appeared in the TV version of "Green Pastures," for which Cab Calloway had been cast. He had to leave due to scheduling conflicts ([read our article p. 149](#)). While Elia played the role of the boy gambler, Michelle flew as an angel on a cloud.



Elia and Michelle performed as a duet again, this time in a recording studio for Columbia's album "Calypso Songs for Children." She recalled in a 2016 Facebook post: "Columbia record producers asked [Cab Calloway] to give me a week off to record the entire LP! So, I flew into NYC on a mission and we got it done! Then flew back to the tour in Miami! But we had a blast recording the old school way. Singing with a studio full of 20 talented musicians, but you had to nail it in 1 or 2 takes... or they would start looking at you sideways! And it didn't matter that we were children! LOL" The 17 songs on the album received a disappointing review from Billboard: "a hodgepodge of mediocre material and the singing itself is unimpressive" (May 6, 1957), while Walter Winchell warmly proclaimed "Michele Clark, Only 9, Turns Recording Star."



A LIFE WITH A MIC IN HER HAND

Michelle left the Cotton Club Revue in mid-July, after the New York gig "Under the Stars." The 11-year-old Hines Brothers (Maurice and Gregory) succeeded her with tap dance routines to great success. Michelle returned to her family, who had settled in California. At 19, while occasionally working as a session vocalist, she was hired as one of the Ikettes for the Ike & Tina Turner Revue. Injured in a bus crash while on tour, she was left behind when the show continued. She went on to perform with several artists, including Little Richard, Dusty Springfield, and Tom Jones. From 1968 to 1973, she was part of the successful Honey Cone (*pictured above*), a Motown trio of female singers whose biggest hit was "Want Ads" (#1 in 1971). In 1980, Shelly Clark married Earth, Wind & Fire's founding member and bassist, Verdine White.

A PERSONAL ALBUM THAT CAPTURES THE UNIVERSE OF NIGHTCLUBS

While critics were sometimes mixed, audiences raved about Michelle, especially the famous people who attended the revue and wanted to get their picture taken with her. Within the troupe, she was a cherished mascot, particularly beloved by all the chorus girls, who enjoyed spending time with a kid—perhaps like the ones they had left at home for a few months... Now, let's open Michelle Clark's photo album together...



With Sallie Blair: "In the 50s, my hero and idol was the gorgeous, exciting, and talented, big-voiced, jazz and pre-rock artist Sallie Blair. Think Marilyn Monroe meets Tina Turner meets Beyoncé! A beautiful soul, on and off stage! A perfect figure, 115 lbs, and 5'5" with a spiritual heart of pure gold. This provocative, exotic artist would set the show on fire like no other I've ever seen! I was so honored and humbled to spend time with her in her hotel room when time allowed on weekends, and watching the fans go wild during her performances. And legendary journalist Walter Cronkite was so taken with her that he followed the tour and documented her daily life. My ultimate hero and mentor."



With her mother Lilly: "The incomparable Lilly (Clark) Day. My mom, tutor, song coach, tour consultant and best friend. We had to meet secretly at night in the South so she wouldn't be arrested. She couldn't stay at the 'Negro only hotel' with the revue so she stayed across town in the White only hotel!"





With George Kirby:

"Every comedian stood on the shoulders of this legendary man. Comedian, impressionist, singer and dancer, the Legendary George Kirby."

He was the first African American to cross over to white audiences, as the first black comedian to do outstanding impressions of white artists! If you don't know about this guy, you'd betta ask somebody!"



With Lonnie Sattin:
"Rehearsing with the beautiful crooner."



With the chorus girls: "My besties were little Dee Dee on the right end and Carla right behind me to the right! Dee Dee was a dynamic performer and personality. Captain Joan Myers is right behind me. I always watched them put on makeup backstage. Sometimes, backstage, they all had vicious catfights over who got to spend more time with me! Once, they didn't speak to each other for 2 weeks, thinking I favored the other! My mother Lilly had to diffuse their differences. They were my interim mommies and mentors.

Most of them didn't have children and were lonely on the road for such long periods (touring 8 months at a time), so I had to spend a little time with each one to keep the peace... Learning and implementing the art of diplomacy and sensitivity at 9 years old."

With Dee Dee Lynn and Joan Myers:

Posing with my 2 favorite chorus girls at the pool in Miami. My absolutely favorite, tiny powerhouse like Tina Turner, was Dee Dee. And chorus girl captain, Joan Myers, who created the legendary dance school Philadanco, creating dance opportunities for people of color.

The photographer took the same photo with Cab right after mine!





With Patty Page



With Nat 'King' Cole: "The King of kings."



With Liberace and his brother George

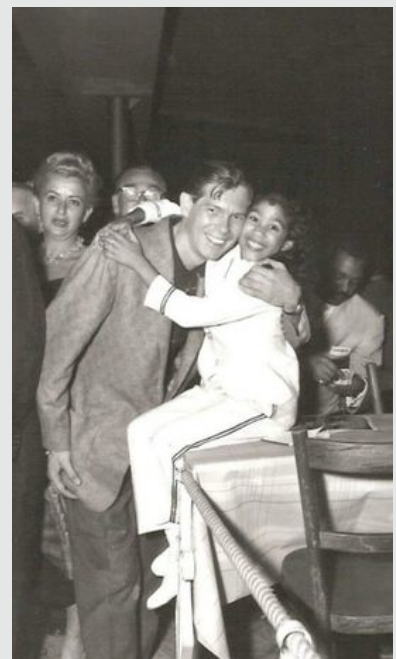
With Jimmy Durante:

"He requested a photo with the little girl who sang with Cab! So, I came running!!"



With Johnny Ray: "The first to cry and fall to his knees, roll on the floor, and pull out his hair, destroy instruments on stage, and the crowd would go wild!"

With Rocky Marciano: "He and his family were fans of the Cotton Club Revue."





With Lena Horne:

*"Beautiful Lena in the audience that night,
with crooner Lonnie Satin, after the show.
She asked for a picture with me, and
my dad rushed me into the audience to her!"*

APRIL 1957

The **SIZZLING** Fun and Girl Show
that stood Miami on its Ear!

Royal
the wonderful where in Las Vegas
Nevada
presents
the
**Cotton
Club
Revue**
starring
CAB CALLOWAY

SALLIE BLAIR ☆ LONNIE SATTIN ☆ GEORGE KIRBY
NORMA MILLER AND HER DANCERS
CAST OF FIFTY
...AND *Girls! Girls! Girls!*

Cab Calloway's Orchestra Direction Eddie Barefield
Production Staged, Conceived by Benny Davis
Supervised by Murvyn Nelson Choreography, Clarence Robinson



When in Vegas, never forget to mention the "Girls! Girls! Girls!" on the bill, even if you have great artists on the bill...

APRIL 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

1-13 (8:45 and 11:15 pm – 3rd show on Saturday)

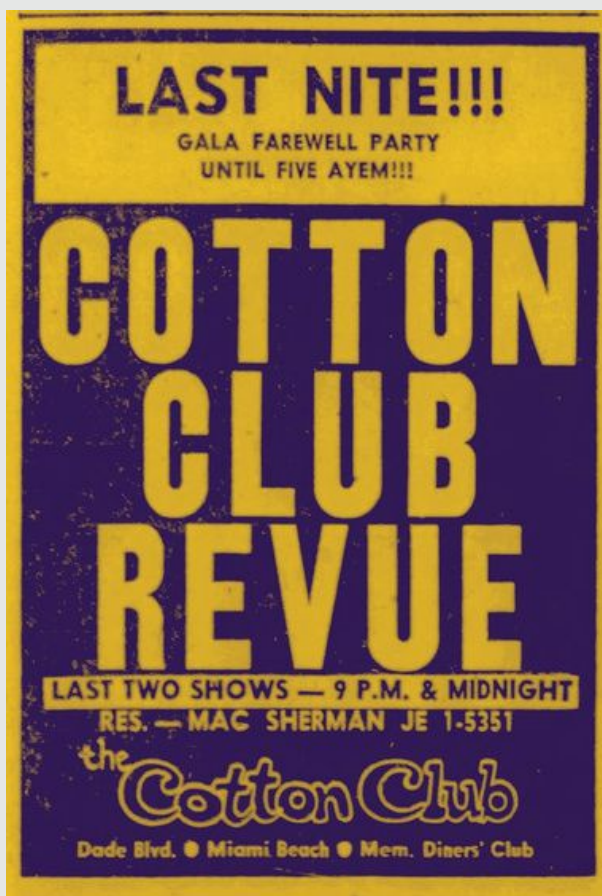
The Cotton Club Revue, Copa City, Miami, FL

13 (9 pm and 12 am until 5 am)

Farewell evening of The Cotton Club Revue, Copa City, Miami, FL

17-July 2 (8:15 pm, 12:00 pm + extra show at 2:30 am on Friday and Saturday)

The Cotton Club Revue, Royal Nevada Hotel, Las Vegas, NV



The Miami Herald, FL, April 13, 1957

**Hi De Ho Maestro
and Revue Slated
For Vegas - N. Y.**



CAB CALLOWAY

* Ex-bandleader Cab Calloway, who six months ago revised the old 'Cotton Club' revue for an unveiling at the Miami Beach Hotel in Miami, Florida, is going great guns with his star-studded show.

Calloway and his show has been contracted for two weeks engagement at the Royal Nevada Hotel in Las Vegas starting April 1. Following this stint, the package is slated for a date at New York's memorial Palace Theatre. Aside from featuring a bevy of lovely dancing chorus girls and his highness of Hi-De-Ho, the show offers the talents of the Orioles Quartet and singer Lonnie Satin.

The Louisville Defender, KY, April 11, 1957



GIRL AND HOTEL remain but stars, excepting Cab, have gone east. But in this belated pix SHOWGIRL SALLY NEAL

showed this illustrious group who were guesting at Miami's Sir John Hotel that there are other things in Miami beside the sunshine to interest the

tourist. Taking note of Sally's obvious charms (l to r) are Benny Payne, accompanist to Billy Daniels, Cab Calloway, Cleveland Indian rookie

Larry Raines; singer Lonnie Sattin, Cleveland outfielder Al Smith and Willie Mays, star of the New York Giants.

The Chicago Defender, IL, April 27, 1957

Coincidentally, 26 years later, Sally Neal will be one of the dancers in the "Pajama Game" theatre revival with Cab Calloway.

. If you think critics here raved over the Cotton Club revue you should read what Las Vegas reviewers are saying about Cab Calloway's show. They really flipped.

The Miami News, FL, April 30, 1957

NBC-TV is considering televising the Cotton Club Revue using the cast of the current Miami Beach show. . . It would be wonderful if they could use some of the great old Cotton Club songs by Harold Arlen and Rube Bloom from the original Cotton Club days.

The Republican, April 6, 1957

• **THE RECORD-BREAKING Cotton Club Revue**, which opened recently in Las Vegas after playing Miami, is being readied for a road-show version with a completely new cast. The original version headlines Cab Calloway, Sallie Blair and Lonnie Sattin. Negotiations are under way now with Herb Jeffries and beautiful Mauri Leighton being sought for starring roles . . .

New Pittsburgh Courier, PA, Apr

Mauri will join. Heb won't....

IN THE CROWN ROOM

THE REVUE AT THE ROYAL NEVADA IN LAS VEGAS



When the revue lands in Las Vegas, road signs on the Strip announce the performers: Judy Garland, Jane Powell, Ted Lewis, Joe E. Lewis, Danny Thomas, and Eddie Fisher. Other musicals playing at the time include Cole Porter's "Can-Can" at the Hacienda, starring Denise Darcel, and "Pajama Game" at the Riviera. Other African-American artists performing are the Mills Brothers at the Flamingo, Arthur Lee Simpkins at the Thunderbird, and Lena Horne at the prestigious Sands. Horne will even pay a visit to the revue for a couple of nights.

THE ROYAL NEVADA'S SHORT, HECTIC REIGN

With fewer than a thousand nights open between 1955 and 1958, the Royal Nevada is one of the shortest-lived Las Vegas casino resorts. The Royal Nevada launched with bold ideas—an eye-catching design, prize giveaways, and buffet deals—but struggled from the start. Imagine building your dream casino, only to have Lady Luck laugh in your face for three straight years. The Royal Nevada was a masterclass in cosmic comedy. Its owner was denied a gaming license for "peddling" it to mobsters before opening day. It launched alongside two far superior competitors (The Dunes and The Riviera) during a tourism slump and featured "Dancing Waters" as its main attraction (yes, the fountains upstaged the entertainers). It hired a blackjack dealer who got caught cheating (ironic for a casino, no?). It closed for unpaid taxes on New Year's Day 1956 and reopened with mob-adjacent operators.



Variety, April 24, 1957

Thanks to its connections with the mob, the Cotton Club package sent from Miami found its “harbor” there in April 1957. The club had just reopened in February. The bad news was that, the moment the revue arrived, the brand-new, colossal competitor, the Tropicana, had just opened. Then, in August, The Royal Nevada was closed again due to its first-ever cheating complaint. It briefly reopened for the holidays to pay creditors and then died for good in 1958.

The property eventually became a convention center for the Stardust, its more successful neighbor, before being demolished in 2006 for a casino that was never built due to the Great Recession. Even its broken rooftop crown now sits in a museum—a fitting monument to what happens when bad timing, bad decisions, and spectacularly bad luck converge on the Las Vegas Strip.

TYPICAL REVIEWS FOR AN UNLIKELY SHOW HERE

The local reviewers, not accustomed to African American performers, can’t help but use stereotypes and racist vocabulary in their writings, as if to warn the white audience:

“Colored talents;” “Those dark-toned darlings with the rhythm in their souls and the electricity in their feet;” “A wild little chocolate sexpot named Leona Epea;” and “those cotton-pickin’, cotton-clubbin’ cuties.” (Jaik Rosenstein, *Hollywood Reporter*, April 23, 1957).

The Royal Nevada used this review to advertise the show in a full-page ad in trade magazines. Note that the advertisement published in local flyers and magazines had white chorus girls pictured. Elsewhere, however, they dared to advertise with blurbs such as, “We say it’s the best show on the Strip. You’re our guest if we’re wrong.”

A PROMISING SUCCESS FOR THE PACKAGE

Although it was contracted for two weeks, the revue lasted eight “frames,” with two shows per day (at 8:15 and 12:00 p.m., plus 2:30 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays). Despite the *Miami Daily News*’s jealous writing that rave reviews couldn’t help the revue from dying (May 13, 1957), the package’s remaining tour was promising.

The general manager of the show confidently declared to a *Hollywood Reporter* journalist that “a partnership has been set up with Ben Marden, a nightclub operator from New York and Miami, for the million-dollar feature film ‘The Cotton Club Story,’ which will be released by United Artists. Sally Blair and Lonnie Sutton, young discoveries of the new aggregation, will play the romantic leads. Shooting will start in September in New York.” We are still expecting its release.

In a city ruled by gambling, how did a consummate gambler like Cab Calloway survive? Well, he probably “dropped a bundle of loot” at the tables, as The *Pittsburgh Courier* suspected on May 4, 1957 ([read page 140](#)). That was a valuable reason for Cab to continue working hard with the revue!



Royal Nevada, L. V.

Las Vegas, April 18.

"Cotton Club Revue," Cab Calloway, Sallie Blair, Lonnie Sattin, George Kirby, Willie Gaines, Joe Chisholm, Michele Clark, Norma Miller Dancers (12), Cab Calloway Orch (12); produced by Murray Weinger; \$3 minimum.

Now that the Cotton Club Revue, starring Cab Calloway, has been uncorked in the Crown Room, the Strip has another lively hit musical—the other being "Can-Can" at the Hacienda. The vet Calloway's voice is as good as ever—good on all notes. All numbers, which include his trademarked "St. James Infirmary" and the w.k. gimmick of scat singing with audience participation, draw solid applause.

Two youthful singing talents stand out in the show. Sallie Blair, a beaut of a girl, and Lonnie Sattin, a handsome lad. Both can be safely tabbed as embryonic stars. Miss Blair socks a full quota of personality and showmanship in "Back Magic," ditto Sattin in his dramatic versions of "I Believe" and "Stand Up and Fight."

Willie Gaines is an energetic terper who tosses comic overtones into his routines both with hoofing tricks and facial contortions. Most of George Kirby's impresoes sound authentic, especially those of Joe Louis and Pearl Bailey. Joe Chisholm contributes a neat bit of baton twirling to the festivities, and a moppet-type youngster named Michele Clark does okay terping and chirping in a routine with Calloway which garners enthusiastic salvos. Norma Miller, who heads the revue's dancers (12) does a very funny single with Calloway, a tongue-in-cheek look at Romeo and Juliet as rock 'n' rollers.

Big production number is an exciting, savage orgy, complete with doctor. The stage is literally set on fire, blasting dramatic effect. The Cab Calloway orch (12) backs each number with appropriate verve. Show, skedded for a minimum of eight frames, will add a third performance on Saturday nights.

Duke.

Night Club Review

ROYAL NEVADA

Las Vegas.—Murray Weinger's "Cotton Club Revue" is the greatest aggregation of colored talent, the most smoothly integrated jump-for-joysepias show in the past 20 years, and it is good for 10 smash weeks.

Those dark-toned darlings with the rhythm in their souls and the electricity in their feet; Sally Blair, who has the makings of a very real big star, and his perennial ol' Highness of Hi-de-Ho, Cab Calloway, and his hornsters are all way, way, way out, GONE, that's what.

This Sally Blair is as creamy, smooth and mellow as a butterscotch sundae, and she sears the landscape. As in her recent solo at Ciro's, her "Almost Like Being in Love" and "Squeeze Me" are pure sock.

"Wa-tu-si," the call of the witchcraft ceremonial, is a turbulently throbbing jungle dancing spectacle with a wild little chocolate sexpot named Leona Epae that makes an acetylene torch look like a paper match. Lonnie Sattin, a young Billy Eckstine - Daniels type, reaches the women in the audience in this primitive voodoo orgy, and in his single with "Love, Love, Love" and "I Believe," and the suave prestidigitation of Joe Chisholm with his baton routine, has never been touched; and Michele Clark, singing and dancing "Evelina" in the next-to-closing, is a singing-dancing, personality-double-plus 10-year-old tot who is utterly absolute. Calloway is as always his effective self with his own familiar standards, the redoubtable "St. James Infirmary," "One for the Road" and "It's All Right With Me." The Anjoel trio, the Orioles and Norma Miller's choreography are all money in the bank.

But oh, and but ah, Marti Lane, Bobbie Day, Joan Meyers, Ropy Young, Ledo Ropy and Lowy Boyd, Lee Meers, Yvonne Blanchard, June Taylor and Dee Lynn, those cotton-pickin', cotton-clubin' cuties! —Jaik Rosenstein.

The Hollywood Reporter,
April 23, 1957

Variety, April 24, 1957



“THE BROWN MARILYN”

SALLIE BLAIR: BAREFOOT STEPS WITH THE COTTON CLUB REVUE

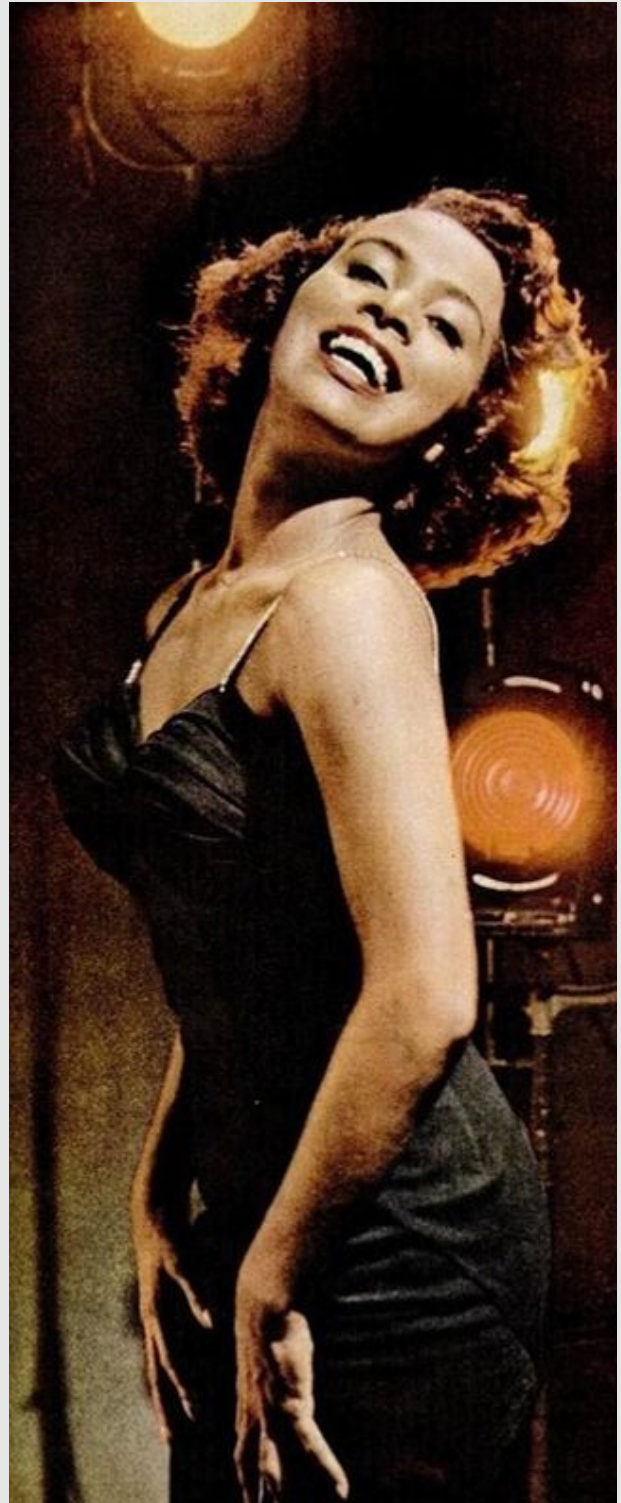
From December 1956 to June 8, 1957, a young singer from Baltimore briefly captured the spotlight alongside Cab Calloway.

Sara Bolling Hutchins (1934-1992), performing under the stage name Sallie Blair, became a temporary sensation in the Cotton Club Revue during what would prove to be a short but profitable chapter in her career.

FROM BALTIMORE TO THE BIG TIME

Born in 1934 in Baltimore, Sallie Blair followed a familiar path for many aspiring African American entertainers of the era. After singing with local bands during her time at Douglass High School—the same public school that had produced Cab Calloway—she briefly worked as a vocalist with the Johnny Otis Band in 1952 before deciding to pursue a solo career in Los Angeles.

Like many performers of her generation, Blair understood the commercial value of reinventing her image. She transformed her natural Brunette hair to Venetian blonde, creating a striking contrast that would become her trademark. This calculated move was part of a broader trend among African American female performers who sought to capitalize on the era’s fascination with blonde bombshells, particularly following Marilyn Monroe’s rise to fame (Miles Davis would dub Blair “the brown Marilyn Monroe”).



Sally Blair by Eliot Elisofon for Life, 1957

The apex of her repertoire was her final rendition of "That Old Black Magic," performed in skin-tight toreador pants with a series of barefoot dance moves ("a strip-toes act"!) while her drummer went wild, "for some cymbal-pounding and derriere-shaking" (*Variety*, June 27, 1956). "A breathing reproduction of youthful savagery," wrote the same critic...

Blair's break came in January 1956 when she appeared on the television show "Chance of a Lifetime," winning first prize (\$1,000 and a week-long engagement in a Miami nightclub). By May, Dorothy Kilgallen was already warning: "The talent scouts ought to be converging on Café Society to catch Sallie Blair." The "big break" happened during her November-December 1956 appearance at Hollywood's Mocambo (notably, Mervyn Nelson staged her show, as he would for the Cotton Club Revue a few weeks later). Frank Sinatra attended the opening night.

"Gesticulating suggestively before mike, Sallie pants out torrid lyrics and winds up in a hair-tossing climax." (Jet, Sept 24, 1959)

In Chicago's *Daily Defender*, Dolores Calvin raved about her: "A new talent is born! She's about the most curvaceous, luscious brown-skin maid you've seen. (...) Any way you want to describe her, she's got the most as far as sex goes. That's why she's already rated as one of the hottest new talents around." Gertrude Gipson nicknamed her "TVenus" after her appearance on Walter Winchell's NBC show. A few weeks before this major exposure, Sallie Blair caught the attention of producer Murray Weinger, who signed her and Lonnie Sattin in early October after their joint gig at the Apollo. An established entertainer who, like Sallie, "bounces around the floor like he owns the joint," approved the decision: Cab Calloway. Sallie was the new remarkable talent he was seeking as the featured songstress in his forthcoming project. "With more experience, a little coaching and a more sincere effort to send out a message, Sallie will take her place among the top night club singers," wrote Hazel A. Washington in *The Chicago Defender* (Dec 8, 1956). Cab was ready to provide that coaching!





But Sallie had already received mentorship from Sammy Davis Jr. as early as 1956 when both were considered to lead the movie biopic of Bill Robinson, as Mr. and Mrs. Bojangles. A romantic relationship also lasted several months until the competition for roles in Preminger's "Porgy and Bess"—Sammy for Sportin' Life and Sallie for Bess. Sammy won his role.

Starting in 1956—besides Dorothy Kilgallen, who surprisingly always had a good word about her—Sallie benefited from the continuous support of the most influential Broadway columnist, Walter Winchell. He was the one who coined her tagline, "Sex with a capital X."



With Walter Winchell, always ready to help.

All these relationships provided access to better venues and more prestigious engagements, which were essential when seeking to move beyond the revue circuit.

THE "UNIQUE" STAGE PERSONA

Blair's stage persona drew heavily from contemporary trends, particularly the provocative style popularized by Brigitte Bardot. Her recently revamped red hair, plus her barefoot dancing (after kicking off her shoes), her breathy vocal delivery à la Eartha Kitt, peppered with screaming notes à la Jayne Mansfield, were calculated theatrical choices designed to create a specific audience reaction. While effective, these techniques were part of a broader performance vocabulary being adopted by numerous young rising stars seeking to capitalize on changing audience tastes. Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandridge had done the same years before.



Her billing as "Sex with a capital X" reflected the revue's marketing strategy rather than any genuine artistic innovation. But that was the Cotton Club's tradition! The new revue, like many variety shows of the period, relied on established formulas of entertainment that combined music, dance, and suggestive performance styles that pushed boundaries while remaining within acceptable limits for mainstream audiences—by mainstream, we mean Miami, Las Vegas and cabaret spectators! The sultry singer was able to send them into a frenzy. That's why she soared from \$150 a week in September 1956 to \$2,000 eight months later!

TOP GAL IN THE SHOW

Whether in Miami or Las Vegas, journalists and critics were fond of Sallie Blair:

- “The Sexsational young singer from Baltimore really reaches star billing with her fierce ‘Black Magic’ number.” (Al Dunmore, *Pittsburgh Courier*, Jan 19, 1957)
- “Sallie Blair, sultry looker with red-tinged coif and slinky gown to match, works over the lusty torch songs, then applies a wild, albeit shrewdly disciplined approach to a long arrangement of ‘Old Black Magic’ with interweavings of ‘Hold ‘Em Joe,’ ‘Matilda’ and assorted Calloway hits excerpts. It’s a crazy, uninhibited, mixed-up segment that keeps the reaction mounting.” (Lary, *Variety*, Jan 19, 1957)
- “Two youthful singing talents stand out in the show [the other being Lonnie Sattin]: Sallie Blair socks a full quota of personality and showmanship into ‘Black Magic.’” (Duke, *Variety*, April 22, 1957).
- “This Sally Blair is as creamy, smooth and mellow as a butterscotch sundae, and she sears the landscape.” (Jaik Rosenstein, *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 23, 1957).

All these compliments encouraged Sallie to test her luck elsewhere. For instance, in February 1957, while working with the Cotton Club Revue, she flew to Hollywood to have a screen test for the role of Billie Holiday in “Lady Sings the Blues.” The role went to Diana Ross... in 1972!

One of the major events that happened to Sallie Blair while she was in the revue was her appearance on the cover of the popular and zesty African American magazine *Ebony* in May 1957 (see page 79). That was then the most prestigious showcase of Black culture in print.

In March 1957, Sallie swiftly flew back to New York to record her first album for Bethlehem, titled “Squeeze Me.” As with her recent stage appearances, all the tracks were arranged and conducted by Richard Wess. The latter would become responsible for Bobby Darin’s successful arrangements of “Mack the Knife” and “Beyond the Sea.” Among the first-rate musicians backing her was Cab’s former bassist, Milt Hinton.



During her stint in the Cotton Club Revue (*Ebony*, May 1957). Below, a trade ad for her LP (June 1957)



THE ECONOMICS OF DEPARTURE

Blair's departure from the Cotton Club Revue on June 8, 1957, during the Las Vegas run was presented publicly as a matter of principle. Her manager, Biddy Wood, issued statements to the press, stating that "Sallie found the treatment of colored artists too objectionable to stay." However, the timing and circumstances suggest more pragmatic motivations. By spring 1957, Blair had gained sufficient recognition to pursue more lucrative opportunities. The entertainment industry was expanding, and performers with proven audience appeal could command better terms working independently or with different productions.

Her personal ambition was noted by *The Hollywood Reporter's* columnist Jaik Rosenstein, who, in his article dated May 7, 1957, ironically remarked: "Sallie Blair sings a nice song in the Royal Nevada's 'Cotton Club Revue,' but she got herself all tangled up in the propeller of a guided missile to Mars and the damn thing took off. Come on back down, 'way down here with us peasants, li'l girl Sal'."

The decision to leave during the profitable Las Vegas engagement—turning down a salary increase in the process—indicated Blair's assessment that her market value had risen sufficiently to justify the risk. And last but not least, in June 1957, her first album "Squeeze Me" was released, providing the perfect moment to... squeeze out!

Blair's time with the Cotton Club Revue provided the platform she needed to attract even broader media attention. Her previous appearances had already generated coverage in major publications, both Black and white, which increased in 1957 and wouldn't stop until the early Sixties. Coverage included at least 4 covers of *Jet* (1953, 1956, 1959, 1963), of course the cover of *Ebony* with Cab (May 1957), articles in *Life* (December 1957), cover of *Tan* (December 1957), a picture essay in *Esquire* (January 1959, with photos by Bert Stern), cover of *Sepia* (February 1960)... All were establishing her as a recognizable figure in the entertainment press.



A BRIEF MOMENT IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Blair's period with the Cotton Club Revue represented a common trajectory in mid-twentieth-century entertainment: talented performers who achieved temporary prominence through established variety show formats before either moving on to other opportunities or fading from public attention.

Her stage persona—the hair, the suggestive performance style, the cultivated sexuality—was a successful adaptation of prevailing entertainment trends rather than genuine innovation. Dozens of similar performers were working the same circuit, employing comparable techniques and seeking similar career advancement.

After her Cotton Club Revue momentum, Sallie Blair signed a three-year contract with the Latin Quarter that only lasted for a few weeks in May 1958, despite favorable reviews. She continued with international tours, including performances at prestigious venues like the London Palladium and the Copacabana in Rio. She appeared many times on TV: on the Ed Sullivan Show, the Jack Paar show, the Danny Kaye Show, and the series "I Spy." While these represented significant career achievements for Blair, they were part of the established infrastructure of 1950s entertainment, even for Black artists, rather than unique accomplishments.

Soon, with the rise of rock 'n' roll, Sallie had to evolve, developing a more sophisticated artistry on stage. She also abandoned her dyed hair in favor of her natural dark brown color and had to forget about all those affairs with boxers, businessmen, or movie actors (and even her alleged liaison with Adam Clayton Powell!). In 1963, she married René DeKnight, former pianist of the Delta Rhythm Boys, in Honolulu. After their divorce, she became romantically involved with Warren Beatty in the late Seventies—he was rumored to have bought her a Rolls Royce.

In the mid-Sixties, her performances featured impressions of Pearl Bailey, Eartha Kitt, and Lena Horne, and she was reviewed as "a belter with a powerful, reliable set of pipes, a keen ear and a voluptuous anatomy." (*Variety*, March 2, 1964). But her repertoire remained mostly vintage. She was also part of Larry Steele's Smart Affairs in 1967 in Atlantic City.

Ironically, Sallie replaced Mimi Dillard for a week in Silver Nugget's Cotton Club Revue of '65. She toured Vietnam with the USO in 1969, with the Eddie Beale Trio. She remained in the nightclub circuit until the Seventies, with a small comeback in show business in 1985 that led nowhere.

THE FATALITY OF THE "CHANTEUSE FATALE"

According to a close and yet not corroborated testimony by drummer Roy Porter in his autobiography, "She had more stage presence than many big-time singers. The only thing that kept Sallie Blair from making it to the top was an alcohol problem."

While her performances generated audience enthusiasm and media coverage, they represented skillful execution of established entertainment formulas rather than genuine creative breakthroughs. Sallie Blair's recording with Bethlehem Records was lost among a crowded marketplace of similar releases from comparable artists. In 1958, her second album was released on MGM, "Hello, Tiger!" (this time arranged and conducted by Neal Hefti), along with a couple of 45RPMs. Her records weren't able to mirror the excitement of her dynamic and provocative stage performances. Sallie Blair's story remains interesting as an example of how performers navigated the opportunities and constraints of the entertainment industry during a period of gradual social, racial, and cultural change, but it was ultimately one of many similar trajectories during that era. And most of those artists are now forgotten.

Sallie Blair died at only 58, on February 17, 1992, in Baltimore, of liver failure following a brief illness. *Variety's* obituary noted that her surviving mother, Patricia Hutchins, had been a singer with the Mason Sisters (a short-lived vaudeville duo in the 20s and early 30s in Baltimore's area); and her sister, Helen Williams, was a member of the Platters and the wife of Platters' original member Tony Williams. The stage appeal was definitely in the family. Barefoot or not.

THE PARADOX OF APPLAUSE

SEGREGATION & ENTERTAINMENT IN MIAMI AND LAS VEGAS



Like any other Black artist who had business in Miami Beach after dark, Cab Calloway always carried an ID card issued by the police department.

This card was exhibited in his living-room as a brutal testimony of those segregated years.

In the entertainment capitals of Miami Beach and Las Vegas during the 1950s, Black performers faced a bitter contradiction: they were welcome on stage but unwelcome almost everywhere else. The same artists who drew packed houses of white audiences—Cab Calloway, Lena Horne, Count Basie—were limited in their movement and barred from the same hotels and casinos where they were performing. From Miami's Jim Crow ordinances to Las Vegas's *de facto* segregation, these two glamorous cities reveal how deeply racism was woven into America's mid-century entertainment industry, while the performers themselves can be credited with helping to dismantle the existing system.

SEGREGATION IN **MIAMI**

In the late 1950s, Miami Beach was a sophisticated getaway and glamorous entertainment destination for tourists and residents alike, but make no mistake—Miami and Miami Beach were typical southern Jim Crow segregated towns. Beginning in 1910 Black workers lived and shopped in **Overtown**, across Biscayne Bay from Miami Beach on the west side of the railroad tracks. The area soon evolved into a successful and exciting center often called the "Harlem of the South."

Racial segregation built a wall between performers and audiences, and between venues and accommodations. The hospitality and entertainment industry of Miami Beach was pragmatic in welcoming Black entertainers to work the stages and Black waiters, maids and cleaners for the restaurants and hotels. But African Americans could not live or play in Miami Beach.

Norma Miller wrote about her time with the Cotton Club Revue: "Mervyn Nelson was the producer and the show broke all racial barriers. We were to be the first all-black show to play the Beach Comber in Miami Beach....The day of our big dress rehearsal, there were headlines in the Miami Sun telling Murray Weinger that they didn't want his colored show on the beach." (Norma Miller, *Swingin' at the Savoy: The Memoir of a Jazz Dancer*).

Black artists were photographed and fingerprinted and required by local ordinance 457 to carry an ID card issued by the police department for proof that they had business in Miami Beach after dark. Curfews were strictly enforced. Even the star, Cab Calloway, had to carry his card in Miami. Cab was no doubt familiar with the rules of segregation, having played Miami, Tampa, and other southern cities where racially motivated violence and other incidents were common occurrences (see our 1933 Day by Day magazine for details).

The COTTON CLUB
Miami Beach, Florida



A couple of lucky young men in an autographed souvenir photo standing on the stage at the Cotton Club Revue.

Shades of the Cotton Club: the all-Black show only welcomed a white audience.



Max Fleischer's nephew Bernie Fleischer, recalls that during one of Cab's visits to Miami, he was invited to dinner at the home of Lou Fleischer, Max's brother. Lou was the musical director for Cab's wacky Betty Boop shorts (read all about them in Day by Day 1932 and 1933), and he and Cab were good friends. In their conservative, segregated neighborhood, the Fleischers received a KKK-inspired note attached to a small cross, threatening them should they ever have a Black man there again. Of course, the Fleischers invited Cab several more times.

In spite of the many well-known Black jazz, R&B, and variety entertainers attracting the white tourists to the supper clubs and hotel stages, the performers were usually restricted to the stage or service areas. They could entertain but not mingle as patrons, sit in the audience, or use the same facilities.

In 1955, **Lena Horne** was booked into Copa City, Murray Weinger's other club, the nearby Royal York Hotel in Miami Beach refused to honor her reservation. Weinger attempted to resolve the affront, but finally, he and Ms. Horne agreed to cancel the appearance altogether.

D.D. (aka Dee Dee) Lynn was a dancer in the Cotton Club Revue chorus line. In a 1998 interview D.D. Lynn-Cotton recalled: [In Miami] you weren't allowed back on that beach after that show. Once that show was over, you had to go back across what they call the Biscay or something like that. Anyway you had to go back over there. (Claytee White's Interview With D.D.Cotton)

D.D.: "At that time, everybody stayed at a place called the St. Johns Hotel [sic]. So if you were into something, this is where you stayed."

The Sir John Hotel in Overtown was white-owned but welcomed everyone. It was a full-service resort with a swimming pool, bar and restaurant, and many of the Cotton Club Revue performers stayed there during the run of the show.



A couple of bathing beauties in front of the Sir John Hotel sign.



The pool at the Sir John Hotel was a meeting place for Black tourists and celebrity visitors not allowed to stay in Miami Beach hotels.



The lovely DeeDee Lynn made the cover of JET Magazine in 1955

Count Basie and Joe Williams were staying at the Sir John at the same time and Jet Magazine reported that Cab, Basie, Williams and Lonnie Sattin were all sporting new Contax and Leica cameras.

D.D.: “Now the chorus girls couldn’t stay there because we weren’t making that kind of money. I mean, we could have stayed there if we had of made [more money], ‘cause they were expensive. So, you’re talking about people like all these baseball stars. In fact, Flip Wilson was just beginning his comedy act and he was working in there. So, you could go in there and you could have a drink or somebody invited you to have dinner over there. But as far as living in there you had to live somewhere that was less expensive.

I can’t think of the other two places there, but they were just right across the street or one block. They just weren’t as nice as that because that place had a pool. These other places were just rooms. That’s the only difference, and probably just cheaper.”

Other Overtown hotels included the Dorsey, the Hampton House (MLK stayed there), and the Carver, each with various degrees of comfort. Hotel rooms in Overtown likely cost between \$3 and \$5 per night. The chorus girls were paid about \$125 a week, so a comfortable hotel room was a considerable expense.

In 1960, department stores in Miami first began to integrate their lunch counters through the efforts of the local leaders of CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) – Albert D. Moore, John O. Brown and Cab’s sister **Blanche Calloway**.

In the late 50s and early 60s, in Miami, as in dozens of other American cities, the new Interstate highways were built right through the historically Black areas, including Overtown, razing the houses and businesses. Civil rights finally began to take hold in the mid-1960s, but after Interstate 95 took the land, Taylor Henry quotes a Miami resident, “We got what we wanted, but we lost what we had.”



DeeDee Lynn (at right) with friends in a Overtown Miami club.

SEGREGATION IN LAS VEGAS



The marquee sign at the Royal Nevada in 1957.



Louis Prima almost quit his gig at the Sahara when they wouldn't let him bring Cab Calloway in for a drink.

Unlike Miami and the South, Nevada did not have segregation laws codified on the books, but the casinos maintained de facto segregation (i.e., whites only), and the residential neighborhoods of Las Vegas were covered by restrictive Covenants essentially preventing any kind of integration.

Residents and Black-owned businesses were restricted to specific areas like the Westside of Las Vegas. In 1954, the NAACP called Las Vegas “a misplaced southern Jim-Crow town” and the “Mississippi of the West”. (Larry D. Gragg, “Becoming America’s Playground”)

Sallie Blair’s agent declared to the press that she left the production during the Las Vegas run at the **Royal Nevada**, “she found the treatment of colored artists too objectionable to stay...They are required to take their meals in the cramped quarters of the dressing room, and aren’t allowed to eat backstage. Actually, there were many little things directed at tan artists, which she just couldn’t tolerate. (Afro American, June 4, 1957)

When **Lena Horne** played the Flamingo in 1947, the owner, Bugsy Siegel, insisted that she stay at the hotel. The staff supposedly burned the sheets after she left.

Cab Calloway had played Las Vegas earlier – The Last Frontier in 1948, The Sahara, the Sands, and the Desert Inn in 1954, and the Sahara and the Dunes in 1955.

In 1954, when **Louis Prima**, who was playing the Casbar Lounge at the Sahara, invited Cab for a drink at his hotel but they were refused entrance to the restaurant. The management said it just wouldn’t look right for a mixed pair to drink at one of their tables. Cab invited Prima back to his trailer for that drink. (Louis Prima, Garry Boulard)

In 1957, **Debbie Reynolds** invited the cast to the Flamingo for a closing night party and demanded that they be allowed to enter through the front door (The Sound of Applause, Audrey Taylor Henry).



The Dunes Hotel & Casino, with its Arabian Nights theme and 30-foot Sultan statue.

Ina Ray Hutton applies her makeup carefully in a racist society.



Remains of The Moulin Rouge motel in Vegas: opened in May 1955 and closed the same year, in October.

D.D. Cotton takes up the story: “We were in [Las Vegas], and then another black show came in, and they worked the Dunes. But you were segregated. You couldn’t live on the Strip. You had to live on the Westside. In fact, this is how I met my husband. You didn’t really see that because we were not allowed in the casino, in the hotel where I worked... Now, all you could do is come on the property, do your show, and then you had to leave the property. But they fed us.... We were not allowed to go into the casino at all. In fact, the **Treniers** were working in the casino at that time. So the Treniers were out front, and we were in the showroom. Naturally, these people had all the business. So we were packed every night. Everybody wanted to come see these beautiful black girls dance and it was really exciting.”

When it moved to New York, the Cotton Club Revue at the Royal Nevada was replaced by **Ina Ray Hutton**’s All Girl Revue and her band on July 3, 1957, ironically, a mixed-race woman who was passing as white! While playing Las Vegas, Hutton divorced her third husband and shortly afterwards married her fourth, Michael Anter, owner of a beauty salon in Las Vegas.

There were other smaller casinos on the west side of the tracks, including the integrated **Moulin Rouge** that opened in 1955. After protests, Nevada Governor Grant Sawyer, Las Vegas city officials, hotel owners, and local Black leaders signed the historic 1960 Moulin Rouge Agreement that essentially ended racial segregation in the casinos, hotels, and restaurants. Once Las Vegas became fully integrated, those smaller casinos soon folded.



MAY 1957



Two elegant and unidentified women are excited to attend the Cotton Club Revue at the Royal Nevada.

MAY 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

1-July 2

Cotton Club Revue, Royal Nevada Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

12 (6:00 pm)

Guest of "Monitor" (radio show), along with Dorothy Shay, Judy Garland, Charles Ritz, WIBA, Chicago, IL

CALLOWAY TROUPE PLANS NEW TOUR

Company May Visit Britain in
Fall With a Production of
'Cabin in the Sky'

By LOUIS CALTA

Next fall, London and the British provinces may see another American Negro musical production headed by Cab Calloway and his troupe. It is "Cabin in the Sky," the fantasy about Petunia and her impetuous Little Joe.

Five years ago Mr. Calloway had a triumphant foreign tour in "Fanny and Beau." The folk opera, it will be recalled, opened surprisingly in London and toured Europe under the aegis of the State Department.

If the "Cabin in the Sky" venture materializes, the sponsors will be Fred P. Finklehoffe, Monroe Koss and Mark Marvin. As in the case of "Fanny and Beau," the Lynn Kool-John Latouche-Vernon Duke musical will be brought to New York after the overseas presentation.

"Cabin in the Sky" was first presented here at the Martin Beck Theatre on Oct. 25, 1949. The roles of Petunia and Little Joe Jackson were portrayed by Ethel Waters and Evelyn Williams.

Loew's State Eyes Cotton Club Revue Post-Vegas Time

Deal is in the works for the Cotton Club Revue to play Loew's State, N. Y., either in the late summer or early fall. General Artists Corp. is presently negotiating for the unit with Leo Cohen who does the booking for the Loew circuit.

The Cotton Club Revue was originally built for the Cotton Club, Miami Beach, by the late Murray Weinger. Following one of the most successful seasons in the history of the cafe (formerly Copa City), unit moved on to the Royal Nevada, Las Vegas, where it is presently working. Closing date hasn't yet been set for the show which has, among others, Cab Calloway, Sallie Blair, Lonnie Sartin and George Kirby.

The Cotton Club Revue was once sought for the Palace Theatre, N. Y., on a two-a-day basis, but apparently no deal could have been made until the Las Vegas commitment was out of the way.

Cohen has long been on the prowl for offbeat and name attractions for the Loew houses. During Easter week, the State had a rock 'n' roll unit headed by deejay Jocko Henderson, and the Metropolitan, Brooklyn, played a calypso unit headed by Geoffrey Holder.

A second edition of the Cotton Club Revue will be produced for the Miami Beach spot for the winter season, while the present unit continues on tour.

The New York Times,
May 18, 1957

The Pittsburgh
Courier,
May 4, 1957

Variety,
May 29, 1957

PEOPLE AND PLACES—Did Cab Calloway really drop a bundle of loot at the gambling tables in Las Vegas? . . .



"Cab Calloway is currently starring in a revue at Miami Beach's Cotton Club. The revue, a carbon copy of the production shows that made Harlem's Cotton Club famous, features rising young stars like singer Sallie Blair (with Cab on cover). Cab helped stage this show.

Cover photograph by G. Marshall Wilson." - Ebony, May 1957



Throwing arms up in triumphant gesture, Cab Calloway follows famous mural which is duplicated in front of Miami Beach Cotton Club. The club, which charged a minimum of only \$1.50, drew capacity crowds, had to move from old Beachwood site to 1000 west Copca City next door. It cost owners more \$100,000 to stage move.



Shapely show girls kick up heels during fast paced production number. Review featured chorus of 12 beauties.



Dashed away by rhythm, chorus twists and whirls its way through intricate dances. The act followed two weeks in New York, three in Miami Beach.



Sally Blair, voluptuous young song stylist (12), waxes in her vocal interpretation of *Black Magic*. During one number with Gordon, Sally did discoet steps, changed clothes on-stage. Review dancers (x.) wore lavish costumes, changed several times each act. "We were lucky enough," Cab says, "to find cheap entertainers."



CAB CALLOWAY COMES BACK

Turning clock back to the late Twenties, famed bandleader helps revive Cotton Club revue

IT WAS just like old times. Cab Calloway, the hi-de-ho man, and the Cotton Club were together again.

Turning the clock back to the late Twenties, reviving memories of "Minnie The Moocher" and bathful gin, the famous orchestra leader walked out on the stage at Miami Beach's new Cotton Club and breathed life into the ghost of the great club that made Harlem a synonym for show business. Leading a big band for the first time since 1932, he paced a 100 minute revue that swept the resort center off its feet and sent critics scurrying to dictionaries in search of superlatives.

The word raced around the entertainment circuit. At 50, after some 35 years in show business, Cab Calloway was back on top of the heap again. For Cab, however, it was more than a personal triumph. It was also the triumph of an idea. He had long held that show business needed the kind of revues that made the Harlem and Broadway Cotton Clubs internationally famous.

Cab, who shot to fame in 1931, was a big name at the Harlem and Broadway clubs. He was a strong drawing card until the late Forties when the big band business dropped to an all-time low. Shifting gears,

he became an actor, took the role of Sportin' Life in *Porgy And Bess*.

Returning to the night club world in 1954, Cab stamped the supper club circuit as a single. Then, divining a new trend, he switched to an old format, staged a Cotton Club revue on the West Coast. When a new syndicate, headed by the late Murray Weinger, decided to revive the Cotton Club, Cab was the logical choice for the lead-off man.

The Miami Beach revue, which features Cab and talented newcomers like Sallie Blair and Leonie Satin, was an immediate success. Variety commented: "... one of the finest and fastest revues since the heyday of the old Harlem spot in the early '30's." Herb Ban of the Miami Daily News said: "The original Cotton Club never had it so good."

Cab, who helped stage the revue, says the show will play Las Vegas in April and then move on to Broadway for a long run. "I'll probably be putting this type of show on in Miami Beach for the next two or three years," he says. "I think it's just about the greatest thing ever put on. It will help everybody in show business. It'll encourage more people to come into the business. It'll make room for more acts. Other hotels are already attempting the same kind of show."



In comedy scene with Norma Miller, Cab, in Dakota-squaw outfit, does hilarious take-off on rock 'n' roll, sings "I'm A Rock 'n' Roll Rouser." Also featured in revue were minnie George Kirby, the Orlans and baton-twirler Joe Chabala. Cab also did specialty number with nine-year-old Michelle Clark, of the Clark Kels dance team.



Leading the line, Stoney Martin of Norma Miller dancers executes kick. Stage was equipped with pulley, allowing crew to change scenery by pulling cord.



Leonie Satin, fast-rising young singer, soothes the crowd. Some 25,000 persons saw show during first 10 days and thousands more were turned away. Critic Robert W. Dowd commented: "Sallie Blair, Cab Calloway and Leonie Satin stopped each show ... Local critics say it's the biggest hit in resort's history."



Continued on Next Page

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BIGTIME SONG STYLING

LONNIE SATTIN: THE SILKY VOICE NEXT TO CAB



Murray Weinger's new Cotton Club Revue had its exuberant star, Cab Calloway, a sexy singer Sallie Blair, a comedian George Kirby, and a dance troupe under Norma Miller. It just needed somebody for the ladies who would round out the cast—a male singer, young, talented and good-looking, with a style that didn't overlap or compete with Cab's (that would never do). Lonnie Sattin (1927-2020), 29 years old, handsome, versatile and already well-known in Miami, filled the bill perfectly.

An Early Life Singing

Alonzo Louis Staton was born in Jacksonville, Florida on November 2, 1927, one of nine children. Jazz singer Dakota Staton was a cousin. His father, Chester, worked as an elevator operator and served as an ordained Church of God minister.

"I can't remember a time when I didn't sing. You know how it is with a minister's boy. You get put in a choir as soon as you can toddle," Sattin recalled. His voice was deep, rich and soulful, and he would become a solid journeyman performer with a long and varied career in stage, film, television, singing and recording.

The Staton family moved to Philadelphia for better employment opportunities. He attended Overbrook High School and Temple University, initially studying Theology before switching to English and Law.

After college, he briefly worked as a barber and tried his hand as an amateur boxer before joining the Freedom Day Choir for touring concerts.

Breaking Into Showbiz

By 1953, under his smooth new stage name Lonnie Sattin, he joined the Earl Hines band at Chicago's Club de Lisa. The following year, he joined Lionel Hampton's band, which led to a job at Jimmy Kelley's in New York City, where he entertained for a year and seven months. Several reviewers compared his voice to that of Roy Hamilton. In Montreal, the *Gazette* wrote, "As soon as the good-looking young man steps on stage you know that he is in complete and easy command of himself as a showman and his audience."

After recording with Earl Hines in 1953, he scored a contract with Capitol Records, recording "Trapped" and "Your Home Can Be a Castle." In 1956, he played the Apollo in Harlem alongside Sallie Blair and Dizzy Gillespie.

At the Eden Roc in Miami, columnist George Bouke compared Sattin to Billy Daniels, Billy Eckstein, Harry Belafonte and Nat King Cole—all in one review! In late 1956, when he joined the Cotton Club Revue at the former Beachcomber in Miami, the *Herald* said that producer Murray Weinger would "have two of the nicest and most talented colored men in show business, Cab Calloway and Lonnie Sattin."

Among his numbers in the revue were "Stand Up and Fight" from *Carmen Jones*, "I've Got It Bad and That Ain't Good," and "I Believe." The Cotton Club Revue played Miami through March of 1957 and moved to Las Vegas April through July. Sallie Blair left the production in June and Lonnie moved up to top billing (after Cab, of course) when the revue hit New York's Central Park Theatre Under the Stars. The revue ultimately closed on July 21, 1957. By September, Lonnie Sattin was back at the Eden Roc in Miami.

On the strength of his recent gigs, Sattin appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show on Sunday, January 6, 1957. He was somewhat overshadowed, however, by another up-and-coming singer on the show that same night: Elvis Presley. (Cab Calloway would have a similar experience appearing on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1964 on the same night as The Beatles.)

Warner Bros. released several Lonnie Sattin singles in 1959, though none charted.

“

“HE'S A WELL-BUILT LAD
WITH A VIGOROUS VOICE
WHO POURS OUT A LOT OF
FEELING IN HIS SONGS,
EVEN THOUGH
HE OVERDRIPS
THE SCHMALTZ AT TIMES.”

—*Variety*



Stage, Film, and Television:

Sattin's everywhere!

"The Body Beautiful," a musical about boxing, made it to Broadway but only lasted 60 performances from January to February 1958. Between 1959 and 1962, Sattin traveled to perform in Rio de Janeiro, where he recorded a full album, *Bossa Nova Warm and True*. In 1961, he had a principal part in "Kicks & Co.," a musical about civil rights by Oscar Brown Jr.

Sattin joined celebrities including Dick Gregory and Josephine Baker at the 1963 March on Washington. In 1965, he appeared along with Cab Calloway for an All-County Talent Show in White Plains, New York.

His films include *The Human Duplicators* (1965), *For Love of Ivy* (1968) starring Sidney Poitier, a villainous turn as Harold Strutter in *Live and Let Die* (1973), and *Revenge of the Pink Panther* (1978). Now often billed as Lon Satton for acting roles, he took recurring roles in the soap operas "Another World" (1968) and "One Life to Live" (1969).

The London Years: a second chance and a second wife

In England, he married his second wife, Sue Jane Smock, an accomplished American artist and graphic designer. London's West End proved lucrative for Lon Satton. He appeared in "Catch My Soul" (1971), "The Threepenny Opera" (1972) with Vanessa Redgrave, and "Mardi Gras" (1976).

He had a supporting role in the London production of "Golden Boy" starring Sammy Davis, Jr. playing the gangster Eddie Satin(!), a part previously played on Broadway by Billy Daniels and Lou Gossett. When Sammy had laryngitis during the 1968 Chicago tryouts, Satton stepped into the starring role. In the 1977 British production of "Bubbling Brown Sugar," Lon recreated old African American vaudeville routines with star Billy Daniels.

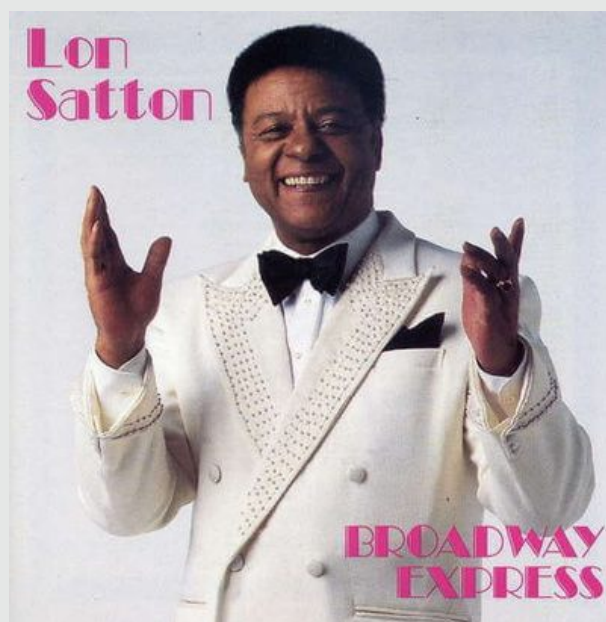
Lon Satton's most successful role was Ramblin' Poppa McCoy in Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Starlight Express" at the Apollo Victoria Theatre in London, which ran from 1984 to 2002. "Lon Satton's rich dark blues solo ['Poppa's Blues'] stops the show delightfully in its tracks," wrote The Independent. Satton remained in the cast for 12 years, performing the entire show on roller skates!

In 1988, Lon started a long-running BBC radio series called "Lon Satton's Gospel Jubilee." In 1995, he toured the U.K. in his own show "Broadway Express" and recorded a live album.

Sammy, Billy, Cab... and Sattin

Never a major star, Satton thrived in that valuable space adjacent to Sammy Davis, Billy Daniels and Cab Calloway. By 2000, he was back home in Mount Vernon serving as a clergyman in Manhattan. Lon Satton died on October 30, 2020, just days before his 93rd birthday.

"If I'm on stage, or in a pulpit, a courtroom or a TV studio. I'm communicating with an audience, and that is what I like."



Lon Satton's "Broadway Express" album, 1995.



Read our full-length biography
of Lonnie Sattin here:

WWW.THEHIDEHOBLOG.COM



ORIGINALS, OLD STANDARDS AND NEW HITS

THE SONGS OF THE REVUE



Design for the sheet music published in 1958. When the second Cotton Club Revue (1958 Edition) opened in Miami on December 20th, 1957, Mills Music published the score for the main tunes Cashbox (Dec 12, 1957) indicated that Mills was "planning a big promotional campaign in conjunction with the traditional event."

With three of the most essential creators responsible for the success of multiple editions of the "Cotton Club Parade" on board – Cab Calloway, Clarence Robinson and Benny Davis – the new Cotton Club Revue of 1957 had an immediate head start. They succeeded in putting together a retro yet contemporary entertainment package.

For the songs, the prolific Benny Davis composed at least seven new numbers specifically for the show, many written to evoke the style of the 1930s Harlem revues. Like those famous night club presentations, the show presented Cab's powerful vocals in made-to-order numbers, alternating with specialty acts performing their own pieces, whether dance, comedy, music or big production numbers.

For the Cotton Club Revue, the production, the performers and the songs evolved from one venue to another, as the performers and stages changed. The printed programs lack detail so we often had to rely on newspaper stories about the shows where the reviewers sometimes guessed at the titles of the songs.

THE COMPOSERS

First, let's examine the songs that were composed especially for the Revue with lyrics by Benny Davis and music by Clay Boland.

Read our article about Benny Davis, [page 18](#).



Clay Boland, in uniform, composing on the piano.

“Perhaps the name Clay Boland never reached the peaks of fame as an Irving Berlin or a George Gershwin. But, of Boland, Berlin, and Gershwin, only one could be depended upon to extract your molar, clean your teeth, AND write a hit tune, while serving his country,” wrote ABS in “Navy Medicine,” (Sept/Oct 2008). Yes, Clay Boland (1903-1963) was indeed a composer for hire whose day job was a dentist. He was the original “songwriting dentist” parodied in “The Midas Touch” in the Broadway musical *Bells Are Ringing*.

He wrote “Tell Me at Midnight,” one of Frank Sinatra’s earliest recordings with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. Boland’s son, Clay Boland Jr. (former dentist AND pianist and songwriter) informed us in 2014 that, “although songwriting was his ‘hobby,’ he wrote over 300 songs, a number of which were performed and recorded by the Big Bands of the 30’s and 40’s, including those of Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman. His best-known song is ‘The Gypsy in My Soul’ [performed by Louis Armstrong, Liza Minnelli, and many others]. During World War II and again during the Korean War, he served his country as head of the Naval Dental Reserve, and in the late 50’s was able to get himself transferred to New York City in order to have an opportunity to write a Broadway musical. One of the projects he hoped would help him achieve his ‘dream’ was writing for The Cotton Club Revue. However, he died [in 1963], shortly after writing the songs.”

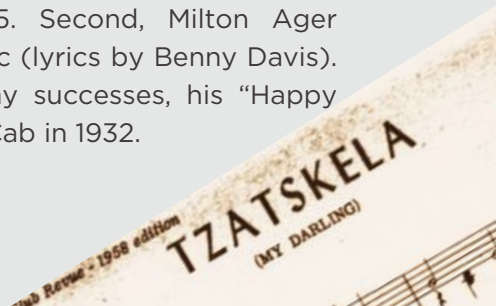
CAB’S TAILORED SONGS

The opening overture for the Revue was likely a medley of the songs to come, along with some showmanship by Cab.

- **“Born to Be Happy,”** an upbeat retro arrangement with words and music by Benny Davis, was an exuberant opening song for Cab singing “...happy, happy, happy, my whole life through.” In the show’s scenario entitled “Life,” Cab sang with the Orioles, providing vocal backup. A reviewer in New York wrote that Cab sang “something” that included the lyrics “in the world of hustle and bustle life is a song and dance” (the specific song title here is unknown). For the second run of the Revue in Miami, “Born to Be Happy” was sung by Cab with Malcolm Dodds and The Tunedrops, melding with a ballet by Norma Miller and her dance team.

- After World War II, the Jewish population of Miami swelled, and by 1957, the city became a Jewish paradise (Miami Beach was called the ‘Shtetl by the Sea’), so the novelty number **“Tsotskele”** (other spelling is “Tzatzkela”) was included, complete with several Yiddish terms. *[A full analysis of the Jewish influence on Cab’s music throughout his career is long overdue (okay, we’ll get to it!)]*

“Tsotskele” (pronounced SHOTS-keh-lah) is a Yiddish word meaning little doll or sweetheart. Cab describes his girl in a mid-song recitation, “You know I won her in a raffle. She was the second prize. The first prize was a bottle of Manischewitz. Seriously, we met at Grossinger’s... You’ve heard of girls bathing in bubbles and champagne, well, this girl bathes in sour cream.” This song might have been a perfect number for Cab’s many forays into the Catskills in the 1960s and 70s, and although we have the published sheet music, it’s not in the inventory of the Cab Calloway Collection. Note that “Tsotskele” is twice an exception in the repertoire of the revue. First, it was not created for the revue but earlier in 1955. Second, Milton Ager composed the music (lyrics by Benny Davis). Among Ager’s many successes, his “Happy Feet” was a hit for Cab in 1932.



In Buffalo, one reviewer reported that Cab sang **"Bie Mir Bist du Shein,"** probably the most well-known song with Yiddish terms.

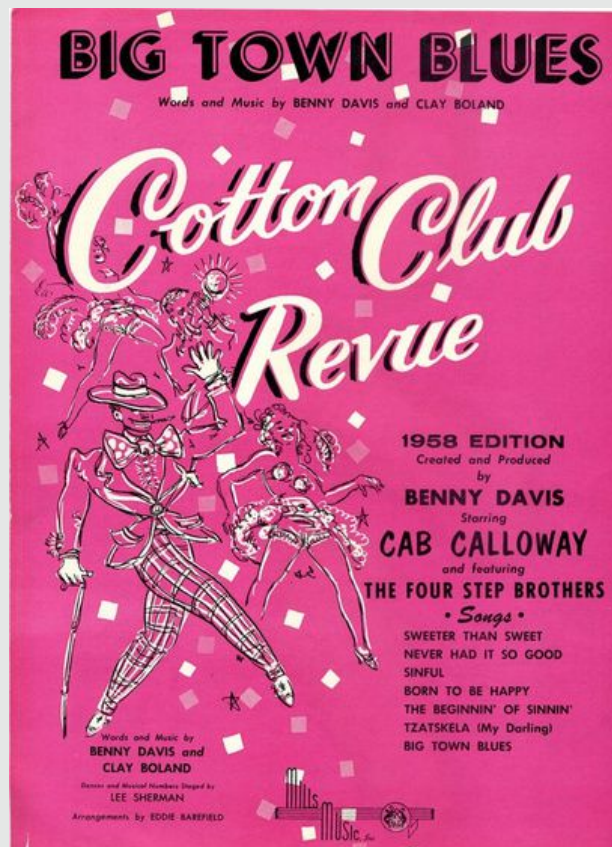
- **"Rock and Roll Romeo"** with Norma Miller, was a burlesque of Romeo and Juliet, with Cab dressed in a puffy shirt and leggings. There's no published song by that title, so we suspect that this number was a reworking of the Benny Davis composition **"Hi de Ho Romeo"** from 1937's Cotton Club Parade Third Edition that Cab performed on stage with Mae Johnson. Read a detailed article about the number, [page 135](#).

- Next up was **"Sinful,"** another Benny Davis original. We can't be sure, but this mild ballad was probably handled by Sallie Blair, with the Orioles behind her, functioning as a preview for Sallie's later numbers in the show and an introduction to the Orioles' harmony vocals. It was later sung by Mauri Leighton along with the Tunedrops, and they recorded it for the later cast LP "The Cotton Club Revue of 1958".

- **"The Beginnin' of Sinnin'"** was an ideal number for Cab, a fun song full of irreverent Bible references reminiscent of "It Ain't Necessarily So," Cab's showstopper from Porgy and Bess. The number was performed with Norma Miller's dancers.

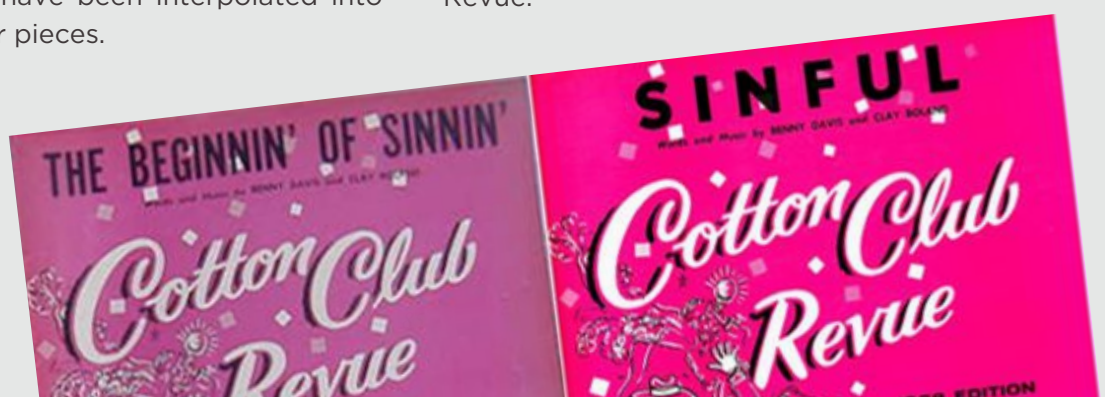
- **"Sweeter Than Sweet"** is a ballad for Cab. If the cast album is a guide, he was joined by Sallie Blair and the Orioles for this number, reminding us of other classic Cab Calloway ballads like **"I'll Be Around"** and **"Blues in the Night."**

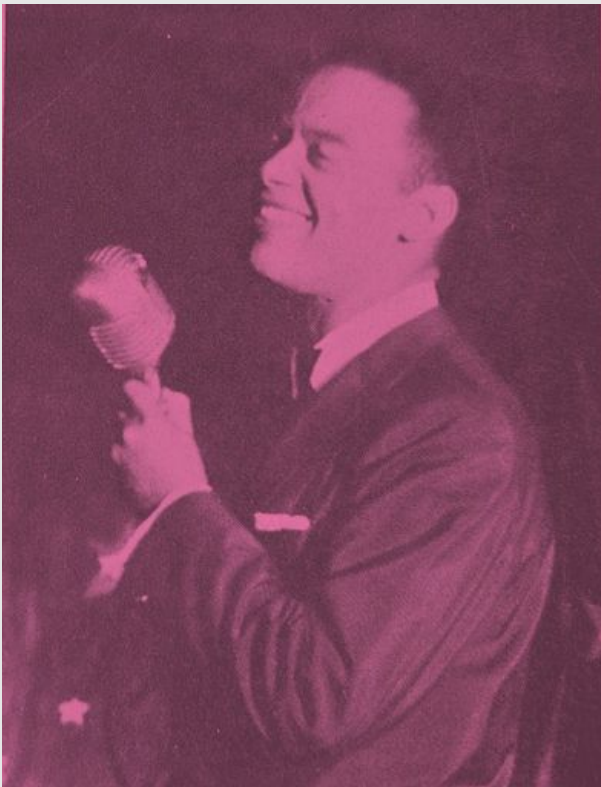
- Sheet music for the song **"Big Town Blues"** was published along with the other Benny Davis compositions from the revue, but we didn't see this title mentioned in any reviews or programs, nor was it included in the cast album. It might have been interpolated into one of the longer pieces.



Songs performed by Cab mentioned in various reviews of the traveling show include **"One for the Road"** (soon to be recorded by Cab for his Coral Records LP), **"It's All Right with Me,"** **"Right Time"** and **"Taking a Chance on Love."** He sang as many as a dozen songs in his solo portion of the show. Others included the Cotton Club Parade classics **"Copper Colored Gal,"** **"I've Got the World on a String,"** **"She's Tall, She's Tan, She's Terrific,"** and of course, Cab's own theme songs **"St. James Infirmary"** and **"Minnie the Moocher."**

While Cab commanded much of the stage time, the revue also showcased the talented supporting cast, with each having their moment in the spotlight, singing their own numbers or performing their own specialties. See the image of the program for the sequence [pages 16-17](#) of appearances in the Revue.





Lonnie Sattin during his stint in the Cotton Club Revue (Ebony, May 1957).

LONNIE SATTIN'S MALE REPERTOIRE

Lonnie Sattin, described in the program as "The Vocal Volcano," sang "**Stan' Up an' Fight**" from Carmen Jones, "**I Believe**," a big hit for Roy Hamilton, "**I've Got the World on a String**," a Cotton Club classic, and "**I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good**," the Duke Ellington standard.

Sattin also probably sang some of his latest single releases on Capitol, "**Remember Your love**," "**The First One to See the Rainbow**," "**Love, Love, Love**" and "**I'll Never Stop Loving You**." (Read our article about Lonnie Sattin, [page 82](#)).

For the 1957-58 season, Lonnie Sattin was replaced by **Jimmie Randolph**, also a baritone, who had similarly just signed his first record contract. Randolph, billed as "Television's Hit Singer Star," played Crown in the Vienna Opera Porgy and Bess in 1965, and Bat Masterson in the 1976 Broadway revival of Guys and Dolls with Robert Guillaume and Babe Wallace. Just before being hired for the Revue, Randolph released "**Way Beyond The Hills**," which he probably sang in the show.

SALLIE BLAIR, WITH A CAPITAL X

Variety described her best: "Sallie Blair, sultry looker with red-tinged coif and slinky gown to match, works over the lusty torch songs, then applies a wild, albeit shrewdly disciplined approach to a long arrangement of '**Old Black Magic**' with interweavings of '**Hold 'Em Joe**,' '**Matilda**' and assorted Calloway hits excerpts. It's a crazy, uninhibited, mixed-up segment that keeps the reaction mounting." (*Variety*, January 19, 1957)

Sallie also would certainly have sung a couple of songs from her first album like "**Almost Like Being in Love**" and "**Squeeze Me**," as well as the Julie London hit "**Cry Me a River**."

"**Don't Worry 'bout Me**" was a classic Cab tune from the Cotton Club days, sung by Mauri Leighton on the cast album, which may have been a duet with Cab and Sallie Blair in the show.

In New York, Sallie was replaced by newcomer Abbey Lincoln, who likely sang her then-current recording of "**Battle of Jericho**." Read our article about Sallie Blair, [page 65](#).



GEORGE KIRBY: "I HOPE I MAKE AN IMPRESSION"

George Kirby (1923-1995) was a comedian and impressionist and also a fine singer. A staple of 1960s and 70s television, he usually sang snatches of a few songs in his act while doing his most popular impressions--**Pearl Bailey, Nat King Cole and Ella Fitzgerald**. An unusual part of this Black comedian's act from the beginning was including impressions of white celebrities--**John Wayne, Walter Brennan, Humphrey Bogart**. In 1956, the Bethlehem label released a jazzy three-record studio cast recording of "Porgy and Bess" starring artists who were under contract to the company. The recording included Sally Blair as Selena singing "My Man's Gone" and "Shame on All You Sinners", and George Kirby as Sportin' Life performing the iconic songs associated with Cab Calloway from the opera. The leads on the album were Mel Tormé and Frances Faye.



George Kirby in October 1957.

THE ORIOLES: ADD SOME DOO-WOP TO THE NOSTALGIA

The Orioles were among the very first of a proliferation of early 1950s doo-wop groups (many of them following the Orioles' lead, naming themselves after birds such as the Ravens and the Flamingos). The Orioles, with lead singer Sonny Til, recorded the highly influential "**Crying in the Chapel**" (later overshadowed by Elvis Presley's cover). Their recent recording of "**Didn't I Say**" was surely included in the show.

"**Doin' the Town**" is listed in one program as a song performed by the Orioles, possibly a duet with Cab. It's an R&B number from 1951, half spoken, half sung, made popular by Floyd Dixon.

The Orioles were replaced in DC by the Nite Caps (three male sopranos and one bass singer) and then by Malcolm Dodds and the Tunedrops for the return to Miami.

*The Orioles:
Alexander Sharp, Tommy Gaither,
George Nelson, Sonny Til,
and Johnny Reed*



PRODUCTION NUMBERS AND FINALE

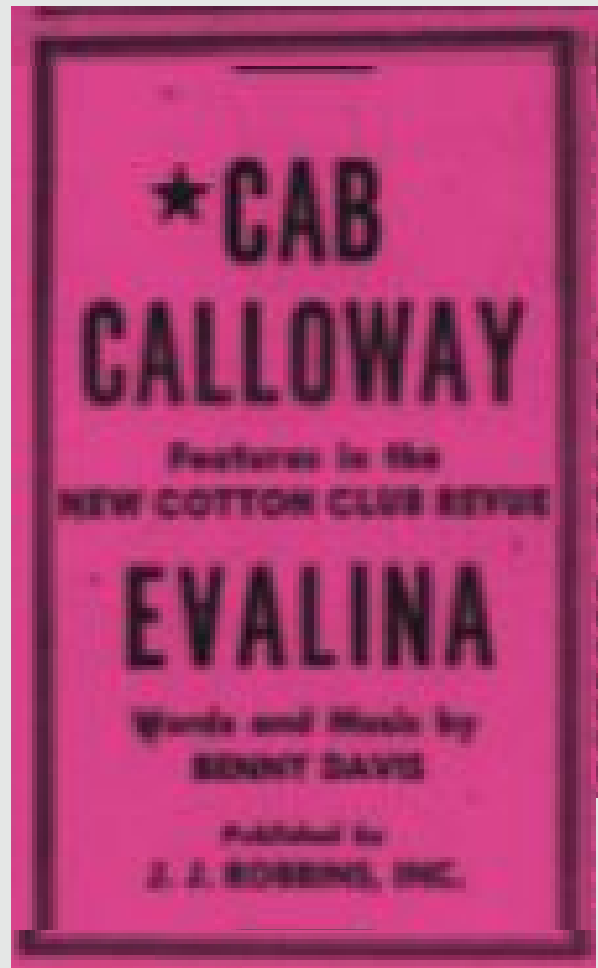
- The Revue included a huge production number, led by Lonnie Sattin with most or all of the ensemble participating, called **“Call of the Wild.”** The song can’t be positively identified, but we found a 1957 French composition by Charles Aznavour, Michel Legrand, and Eddie Barclay called “Avec ces yeux-là” that was reworked in English as “Call of the Wild” and recorded by June Richmond that year.

- Toward the end of the Revue, young Michelle Clark sings her song **“Evalina”** and shares the stage with Cab Calloway. Where’s the sheet music? We know it exists based on a photograph of Cab and Benny Davis actually holding it ([see page 18](#))!

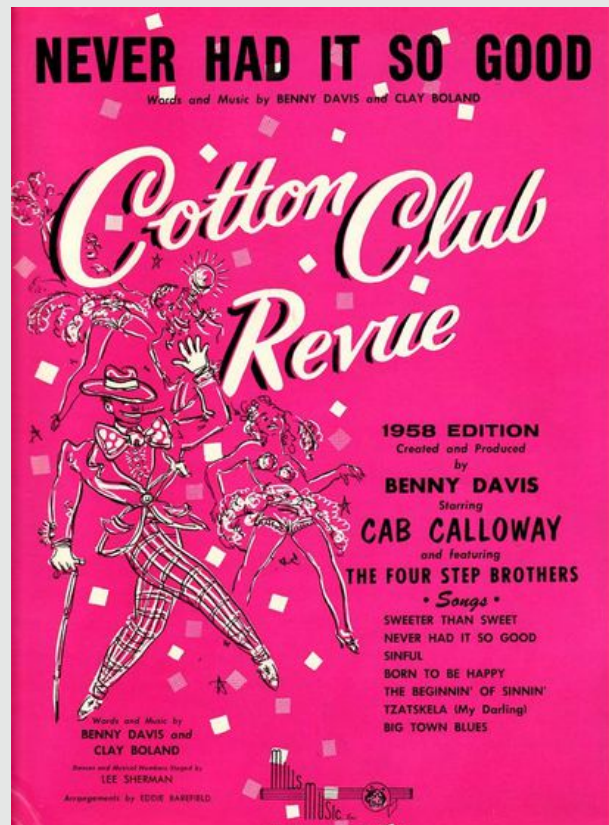
- **“Never Had It So Good,”** one of the Benny Davis originals, was recorded by Malcolm Dodds and the Tunedrops for the cast album, but was performed by the full ensemble as part of the finale.

See our article on the LP “Cotton Club Revue of 1958” ([p 170](#)) for a critical listening of that album and more information on the songs.

For many of the numbers, the “Cotton Club Beauties” (the sexy chorus line) were included just like the Cotton Club girls (and boys) from the original Cotton Club productions in the late 1930s. In 1957, there were sure to be plenty of people in the audience who had seen and loved those original “Cotton Club Parades.” We can imagine their pleasure and thrill at seeing Cab Calloway once again, a little more mature but still belting out the songs, along with a program complete with tap dancing, costumes, comedy, and plenty of pleasures for the eyes and ears.



Detail of a trade advert for publisher J.J. Robbins, Inc in Variety (Jan 2, 1957)



JUNE 1957



"Making quick change, choreographer Leona Epae takes costume off rack. Critics said revue features one of best-looking chorus lines in the business. "We were very fortunate in finding girls," Cab says. "We had more than 50 beautiful dancers to pick from." (Ebony, May 1957)

JUNE 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

1-July 2

Cotton Club Revue, Royal Nevada Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

8

Sallie Blair leaves the Cotton Club Revue and is replaced by Diane Lefti, Royal Nevada Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

9 (11:40-11:50 pm)

Guest with George Kirby (7'30 on air) for live broadcast on "Monitor" radio show, NBC, live from The Royal Nevada Hotel (erroneously announced from the Dunes), Las Vegas, NV

16 (11:40-11:50 pm)

Guest with George Kirby (7'30 on air) for live (or remote?) broadcast on "Monitor" radio show, NBC, live from The Royal Nevada Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

17 (evening)

Attends Rhonda Fleming's party, Tropicana, Las Vegas, NV

22 (10:21-10:29 pm)

Guest for broadcast (7'45 on air), Jean-Paul King opens, on "Monitor" radio show, NBC, live from The Royal Nevada Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

28 (9:18-9:25 pm)

Guest for broadcast (5'00 on air), Jean-Paul King opens, on "Monitor" radio show, NBC, live from The Royal Nevada Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

*The routine sheet for the radio show
Monitor, aired on NBC,
on June 9, 1957*

SD-2577 10-55

MONITOR

ROUTINE SHEET

PAGE 18
DATE JUNE 9, 1957
TIME 11:40:00

TIME	RADIO	CENTRAL	MEMO
11:40:48 11:41:00	FRONT: INTRO TO	(0:15)	Recan
11:40:53 11:41:15	TAPE: CAB CALLOWAY & GEORGE KIRBY - TUNES (8:40)	LAS VEGAS	
	OPEN: WELL, IN CASE YOU HEARD		
	CLOSE: ...RADIO CENTRAL		
11:49:15	FRONT: THANKS AND DEARON CUTAWAY		

All-Sepia Extravanzas Broadway Bound?

Say Larry Steele Revue And Cab Calloway's Show Are Headed for the Stem

NEW YORK—Late this summer or early next fall Broadway may be treated to its first variety all-colored entertainment in many years.

The two shows likely to break the blight are the Cotton Club Revue and Larry Steele's "Smart Affairs of '58."

According to an announcement from the General Artists Corp., negotiations have been entered into with Leo Cohen, who books the Loew's Circuit, to bring the Cotton Club show into Loew's State Theatre later this summer or in the early fall.

The show, which was originally designed by Cab Calloway and produced by Clarence Robinson, was offered with great success at the Cotton Club in Miami by the late Murray Weinger.

IN FACT, the show was credited with enjoying the greatest season in the history of the beach and shortly after being presented, seating demands forced its removal to a larger nitery. Current at the Royal Nevada, Las Vegas, the CCR stars Calloway, Sallie Blair, Lonnie Satin and George Kirby.

However, its most eye-appealing quality is the show and chorus girls.

Also being sought for a showing on the big street and television is the new show being stitched together by Larry Steele. Titled "Smart Affairs of '58," the new show is being readied for its month's end bow at the Dunes Hotel in Vegas.



CAB CALLOWAY
... bound for Broadway?



LARRY STEELE
... to break the blight?

A return session for the Steele opus will run through eight weeks, after which it is likely the show will come to Broadway.

Cab Calloway's Cotton Club Revue at the Royal Nevada had some Hollywood scouts looking for talent. When U-I does Bill Robinson's life, they could find their Bill Robinson right on that stage.

RHONDA FLEMING'S last night at the Tropicana called for a celebration and all the stars performing on the Strip came for her farewell show. She's a beautiful girl and keeps up the glamor to the n'th degree and the show surrounding her was excellent.

At Rhonda's party, Cab Calloway whose Cotton Club Revue is a big hit at the Royal Nevada, said that U-I has had a talent scout there looking for possibilities for their Bill Robinson movie.

The San Francisco Examiner,
June 19, 1957

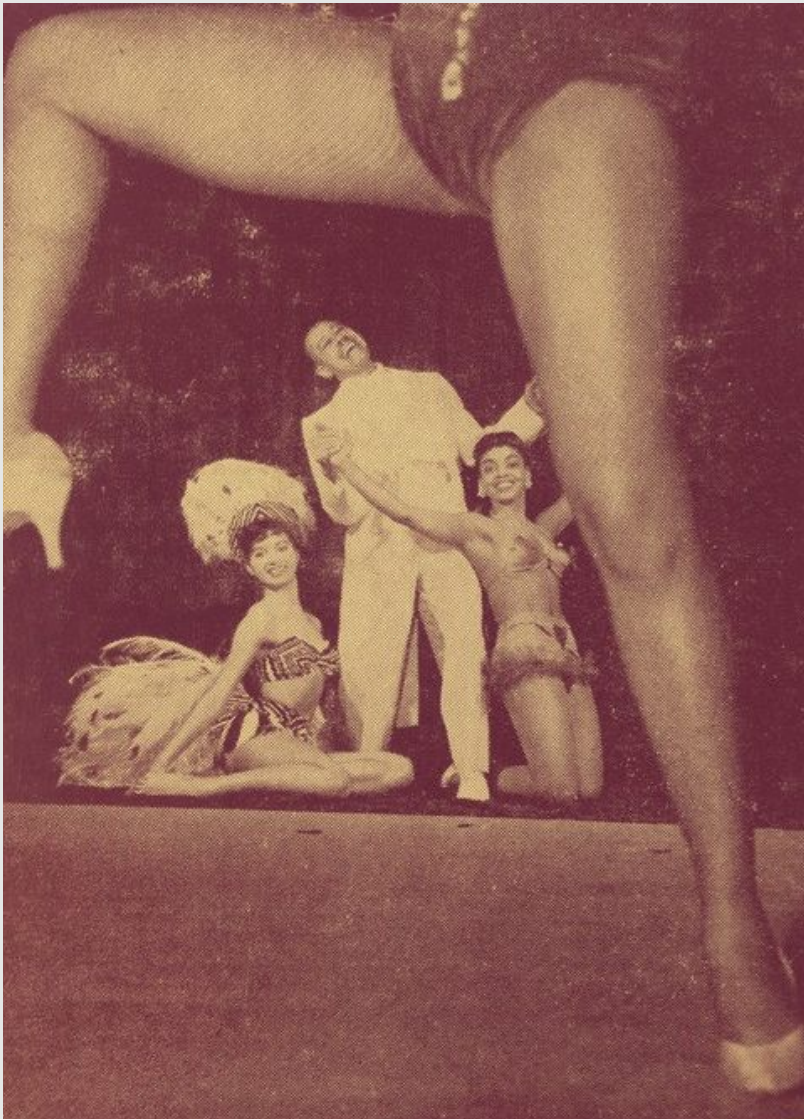
The Pittsburgh Courier, June 8, 1957

The Philadelphia Inquirer, PA,
June 3, 1957

The Royal Nevada in Vegas ad blurbs its current Cab Calloway Cotton Club Revue with: "We say it's the best show on the Strip. You're our guest if we're wrong" ... Der Bingle and

ANONYMOUS AND ICONIC

THE CHORUS GIRLS



“

“THE CHORUS GIRL
IS THE
FOUNDATION OF
SHOW BUSINESS.”

Larry Steele
—*Ebony*, January 1957

*Cab and a couple of
charming chorus girls
framed by Leona Epae's legs
(don't ask how
we know it's her).*

Chorus girls, chorines, ponies, gypsies – the anonymous, pretty, long-legged, limber, sexy, versatile singing and dancing young women of the chorus line were the mainstay for countless musicals, revues, concerts, movies, and nightclubs. Rarely credited, they worked hard at their uniform and often complex dance sequences backing up the star performers and dancing their own choreographed routines.

These women were often the glue that held big-name acts together, although their individual names were rarely known to the public, marking them as trailblazing, often unsung heroines of the American entertainment industry.

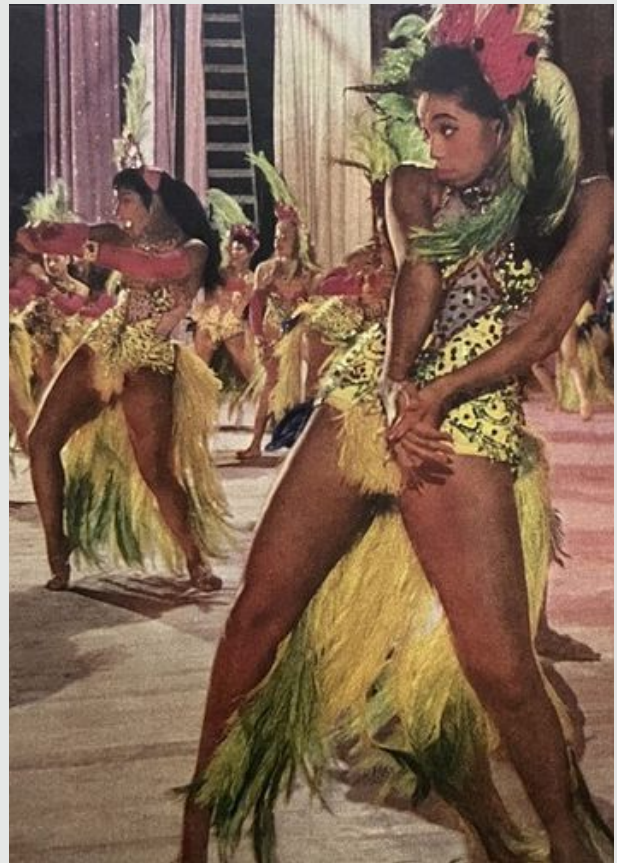
BEHIND THE COLOR LINE: AFRICAN AMERICAN CHORUS GIRLS

What were the options for a young African American dancer looking for work as a chorus girl in 1957? What venues were hiring for Black chorus lines?

In 1957, Black chorus girls in musical theater, revues, nightclubs, or stage shows faced severe racial barriers due to ongoing segregation and discrimination in the entertainment industry. Mainstream Broadway productions and white-owned venues still excluded Black performers from their casts, especially in ensemble or chorus roles.

The Chitlin' Circuit, the network of Black-owned or Black-friendly theaters, clubs, and other venues across the South, Midwest, and urban North, provided steady work for Black performers, including chorus girls in revues, variety shows, and touring productions. It was a primary source of employment for many Black entertainers during segregation. Other opportunities were heavily concentrated in Black-oriented venues and circuits. The most consistent employers for Black chorus talent in the 1950s were the **Apollo Theater** and **Small's Paradise** in Harlem, the **Savannah Club** in Greenwich Village, and **Club DeLisa** in Chicago.

By the mid-1950s, some **Las Vegas** hotels like the **Moulin Rouge** (open for just a few months in 1955) and later spots like the **Flamingo** or **Sands** began hiring Black showgirls and chorus performers as the Strip slowly desegregated (see our article on Segregation in Miami and Las Vegas).



Faux-African costumes and exotic production numbers were common themes in all-Black revues throughout the 20th century.



Choreographer Clarence Robinson eyes his beautiful chorines rehearsing for the Moulin Rouge in 1955, the first African American chorus line in Las Vegas. (Our Life, March 1955)



Producer Larry Steele with some of his Beige Beauts

Touring revues provided employment for countless young African American dancers. **Larry Steele** (1913-1980) was successful from 1946 to 1971 with his "Smart Affairs" revues, where he presented the "Beige Beauts," a chorus line of 16 girls, also called the "Sepia Revue," or the "Modern Harlem Girls." Based at the Club Harlem in Atlantic City, the revues played the Apollo Theater in New York, the Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas (in 1955), as well as Canada and Australia.

Steele brought the first all-Black review to Miami in 1950 at an earlier venue also named the Cotton Club. Steele included new and old stars to headline his revues, including Chuck Berry, Billy Daniels, Lou Rawls, Dinah Washington, and, in the summer of 1967, Cab Calloway.



Leon Claxton promised 32 weeks of well-paid employment and adventure for talented dancers.

Tampa Florida impresario **Leon Claxton** (1902-1967) recruited his "Brownskin Showgirls" or "Harlemettes" from around the U.S. and Cuba. His "Harlem in Havana" revue was a major attraction with the traveling Royal American carnival shows from 1936 to 1967. Chorine and co-manager Gwendolyn Bates, later Mrs. Claxton, remembered, "Hard work and all, I enjoy trouping. One year, at the Minnesota State Fair, we gave 28 shows in one day."

Leon Claxton's "Brownskin Showgirls" chorus line that toured with carnivals around the U.S.

The Cotton Club Revue of 1957 was a timely and successful all-Black venture. The late 1950s marked the beginning of slow change, with more integration by the early 1960s, but 1957 remained a segregated era for most performers.



THE DANCERS OF THE 1957 COTTON CLUB REVUE

Cab explained in a 1957 *Ebony* interview, “Night clubs have to compete with TV and spectaculars. People see big shows on TV and they want to see big shows and lavish productions when they go to night clubs.”

Cab first tested the 20-year-old revue concept for an appearance in October 1956 at Ciro’s in L.A. (Elvis Presley attended). Also called the “Cotton Club Revue,” the show included a short line of five chorus girls—Paulette Easley, Valerie Follins, Denise Kelley, Yvonne Pratts, and Harriet Young. Cab’s revue at Ciro’s in Hollywood, Larry Steele’s show at the Dunes in Las Vegas, and Broadway’s “Mr. Wonderful” with its integrated chorus line, were all running concurrently!

The Cotton Club Revue of 1957 had three distinct teams of dancers: the Savar dancers ([read page 138](#)), Norma Miller’s group ([read page 48](#)) and the Cotton Club girls. Many of the Cotton Club Revue chorus girls had worked previously or would soon work for Larry Steele or Leon Claxton. “How else can a girl see America and get paid for it?” asked Susy Serrano, a Claxton chorus girl.

Below and right: the first line of the Cotton Club Revue, at Ciro’s in Hollywood, in October 1956 (Ebony, January 1957)

Casting for the chorus line threw a wide net, recruiting from talent shows, dancing schools or local community performances. In Las Vegas, dancers were scooped up from the recently closed Moulin Rouge.

Due to their highly successful later careers, we know all about Dee Dee Lynn-Cotton, Audrey June Taylor and Norma Miller who all danced in the Cotton Club Revue of 1957.

What do we know about the rest of the wonderful dancers? We know their names, but precious little else.

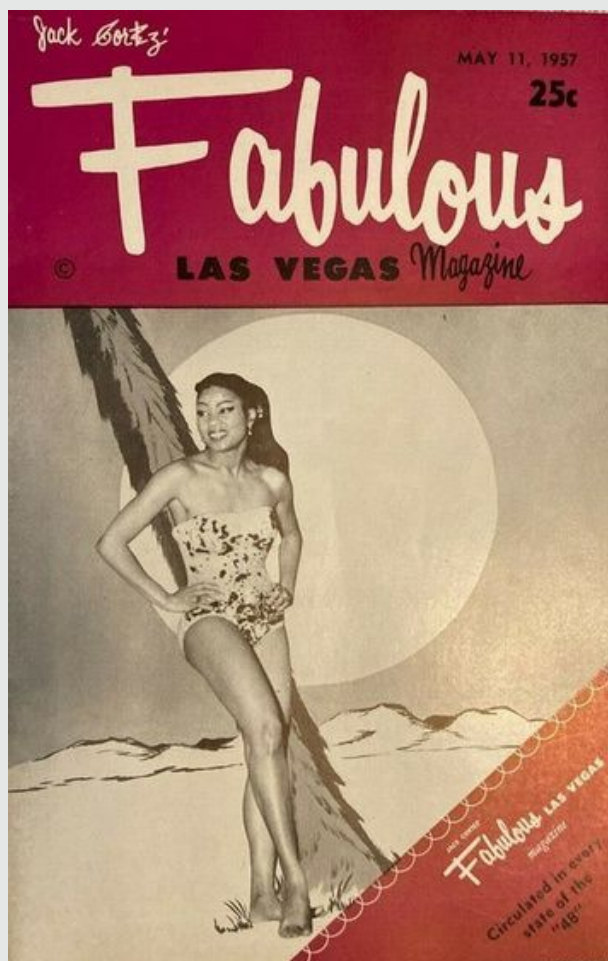


Dancers in Cotton Club revue, shown with singer Renee Robin (c.), were Denise Kelley, Paulette Easley, Harriet Young, Valerie Follins, Yvonne Pratts (kneeling).



Cotton Club Girls Yvonne Blanchard, Theodora Boyd, and Delcenia Boyd had all been principals in a southern dance ensemble called the **Magby Creative Dancers** since the mid-1940s.

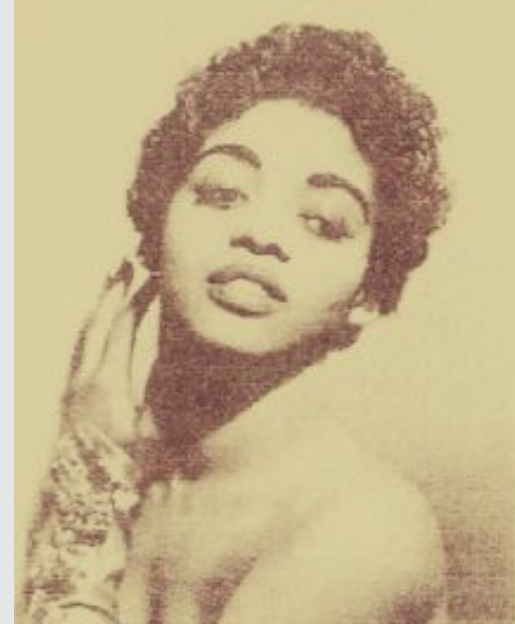
Leona Epae's photogenic face, figure, and especially her legs, graced the back cover of the Cotton Club Revue LP and the May 7, 1957 issue of "Fabulous Las Vegas" magazine. Leona joined the Revue shortly after touring Australia as a member of "The Harlem Blackbirds". Becoming a jazz singer in the 1960s, she performed at Birdland and the Apollo.



The fabulous Leona Epae (born Laviscount) was a frequent model for photographers. But it was probably the first time an African American chorus girl appeared on the cover of this local magazine.

WATCH A BRIEF VIDEO OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHORUS GIRLS GETTING READY TO GO ON STAGE

[SCAN OR
CLICK HERE](#)



Audrey June Taylor had a portfolio with exotic poses, dance figures and this glamorous portrait.

Dee Dee Lynn was photographed for *JET* Magazine's cover in 1955; she had studied with Katherine Dunham and worked for Larry Claxton. Returning to Vegas after her stint with Cab, she later became the first Black cocktail waitress in Las Vegas as well as the first African American female blackjack dealer and floor supervisor at a Vegas casino on the Strip.

Other dancers in the ensemble were **Dolores Boyd, Lea Mears, and Barbara Thomas**, for a total of eight girls on the main chorus line, choreographed by Clarence Robinson. The *Hollywood Reporter* called them "those cotton-pickin', cotton-clubbin' cuties!"

Most of the girls stayed with the production through the Miami, Las Vegas, Washington, and New York shows. **Audrey June Taylor** joined late in the Miami run when it was held over. In 1967, Taylor produced her own Cotton Club Revue that included Black and white dancers (with no Cab Calloway involvement, however). Also joining the line later was **Sally Neal**, who had been dancing on Broadway in *Mr. Wonderful* with Sammy Davis Jr.

By the 1960s, some talented young dancers might have found jobs as Go-Go Girls in discotheques. Today, most chorus line jobs have disappeared, although the **Radio City Rockettes** (36 dancers in the line!) are still well-known around the world, and there are efforts like the **Chicago Chorus Girl Project** that train dancers in traditional chorus-style high kicks.

“

“THERE’S SOME
STRONG TALENT
IN THE ANATOMY
OF THIS NEW ACT.”

—*Tube, Variety*

THE PERFECT SALLY BLAIR’S ERSATZ DIANE LEFTI, LEAD SINGER FOR A MONTH

The June 4, 1957 article from the *Afro-American* indicates that “Sallie [Blair] was not replaced by Rose Hardaway, as was announced in several New York columns ... A new, young kid, Diane Lefti, was put in the spot.”

Indeed, Diane (or Dianne, or Diana) Lefti replaced Sallie Blair in the revue for the end of the Las Vegas run between early June and July 2. In Vegas, Diane (born in 1928) was already acknowledged as an “attractive blonde with lots of sex appeal” and “an exotic song stylist” in Las Vegas, where she sang at the Bal Tabarin with her accompanists, the “Right Hand Men.”

According to her description, she perfectly fitted into Sallie’s part. Seeing one of her rare pictures, she appears as a blonde fatale, quite like Sallie Blair.

She had just appeared in the “Cotton Club Revue” at Ciro’s in Los Angeles (no connection with the Weinger’s revue), with Timmie Rogers.



The Daily News, NY Sep 19, 1962

Another article from *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 13, 1957, indicates that she was once Benny Carter's Mrs. (they were already divorced in March 1956) In the same column, apparently Diane "had the Las Vegas costumers making bets as to her racial identity. They are right, she's white." To verify this point, it would be best to watch the TV show "Stars of Jazz" #58, from August 12, 1958, where she appears, backed by Joe Darensbourg's band (with former Cab's bassist, Al Morgan). On the same show, she sings "'Deed I Do" and "I Got It Bad and That Ain't Good" with Bobby Troup. Her "unique approach to jazz or ballad tunes (...) dominates the atmosphere with contagious moods that prove par excellence." (*Reno Gazette*, Sept 8, 1962). *Variety* critic, Tube, wrote about her when she was appearing at the Melody Room in Los Angeles with "Her Right Hand Men" (consisting of vocalist Dale Monroe and 5 musicians): "The blonde Miss Lefti, an experienced vocalist with considerable jazz imagination, generally bypasses lyrics sincerity to concentrate on flashy anatomical gyrations and melodic momentum." (May 16, 1962).

A typical lounge singer for the Vegas venues, she remained on the West Coast, mainly in Nevada, managing "The Renegade Club," a jazz nitery (which welcomed Buddy Collette, Terry Gibbs, and Buddy de Franco) in Westwood Los Angeles, until 1960. Then, she went on singing in clubs of the area.

We lost track of her after 1968, and the death of one of her siblings, John K. Krizmanich, a former stock car racer. She was then living in Gardena, CA.



With Kenny Washington,
The Pittsburgh Courier, August 4, 1956



ROYAL NEVADA HOTEL
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

**Featuring
Famous Known
Artists**

Including:

Bix Beiderbecke
Bunny Berrigan
Gene Krupa
Barney Bigard
George Brunies
Cab Calloway
Hoagy Carmichael
Barbara Carroll
Benny Carter
Buck Clayton
Larry Clinton
Al Cohn
Lee Collins
Eddie Condon
Wild Bill Davison
Johnny Dodds
Tommy Dorsey
Jimmy Dorsey

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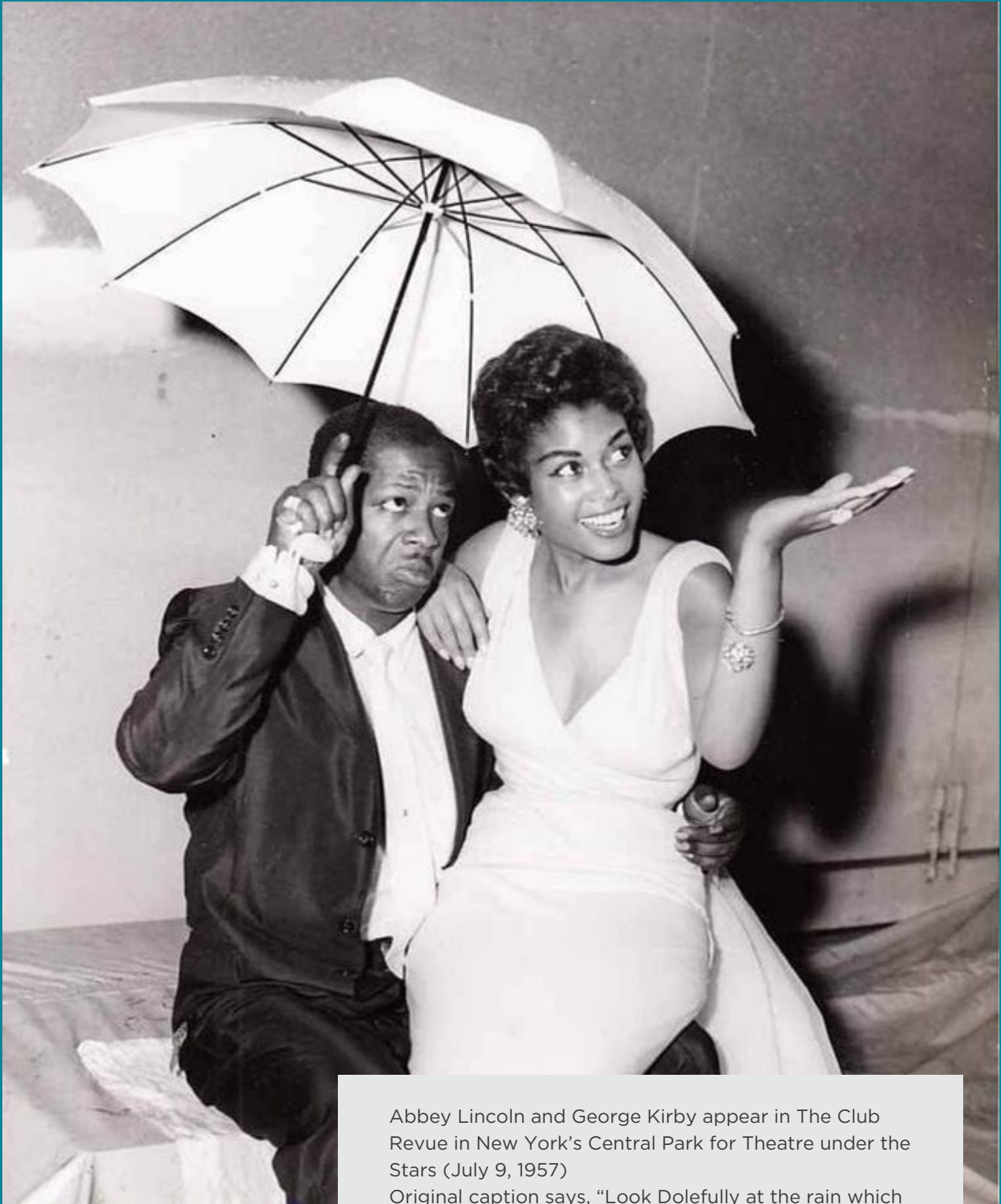
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ALBUM

JULY 1957



Abbey Lincoln and George Kirby appear in The Club Revue in New York's Central Park for Theatre under the Stars (July 9, 1957)

Original caption says, "Look Dolefully at the rain which washed out their dress rehearsal last night." - Photo by Dick Weaver, Photofest.

JULY 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

2

Closing night of the Cotton Club Revue,
Royal Nevada Hotel, Las Vegas, NV

4-7 (8:30 pm)

Cotton Club Revue, Carter Barron
Amphitheater (4,200-seat outdoor),
American Music Festival, Rock Creek Park,
Washington, D.C.

7 (or Sunday 14) (4:00 pm)

Guest of radio show "Monitor," along with
Cary Grant, Sophie Tucker, Cyd Charisse,
Oscar Peterson (playing from London House
in Chicago), WMAQ, Chicago, IL

8-21 (8:45 pm)

Cotton Club Revue, Theatre under the Stars
(outdoor), Wollman Memorial Theatre,
Central Park, New York, NY

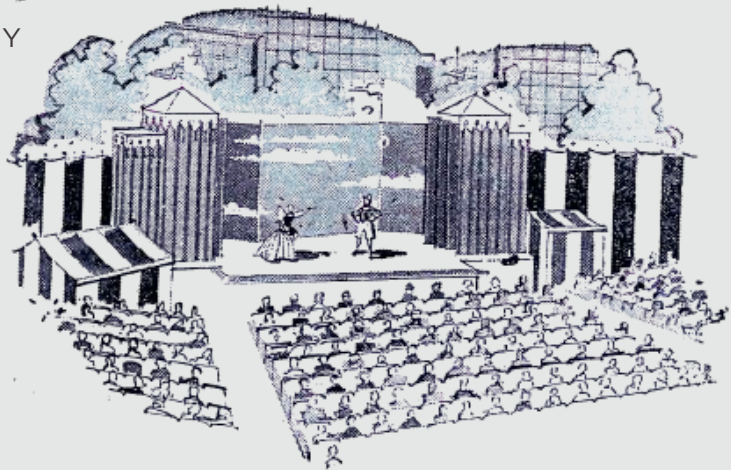
15 (10 pm)

Guest with George Shute, "This is New
York" radio show (WCBS), New York, NY

22-August 15

Vacation

New York, New York
• Our Wonderful Town!



It's a town that always makes good theater and is always a center for good theater. Off Broadway or on, light or dramatic, whatever your choice, the summer fare in New York will please theater lovers of all tastes and temperaments. This summer marks the first for our "Theater Under the Stars," the Central Park Summer Festival of musical hits being held at the Wollman Memorial through September 14th. For tickets call LEhigh 5-7373. It's all part and parcel of our wonderful town now even more wonderful because

"New York is a Summer Festival"

New York Times, July 14, 1957

BLOOMINGDALE'S • LEXINGTON at 59th, NEW YORK 22, N. Y. • EL 5-596

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16th and COLORADO AVE. N.W.
in Beautiful Rock Creek Park.

3 more times Thru WED. JULY 3

The American MUSIC FESTIVAL

Louis ARMSTRONG & his ALL STARS
ERROLL GARNER & KID JACK DRY-TEAGARDEN

Featuring: Max Kaminsky, Lou Stein, Jack Lesberg, Velma Middleton, Trummy Young, Edmond Hall, Billy Kyle, Barrett Deems, Peanutz Hucks

PRICES \$1.25, \$1.75, \$2.50, \$3.00

COMING This THUR. JULY 4 '57

THE COTTON CLUB REVUE Starring **Cab Calloway**

2 1/2 MUSICAL EXTRAVAGANZA

PRICES 1.75, 2.50, 3.00, 3.85 INC. TAX

GOOD SEATS AVAILABLE FOR ALL PERFORMANCES

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SUPER MUSIC CITY BOX OFFICE — 1330 F Street, N.W. — ST. 3-3234
Open Daily 9:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. Mon. thru Sat.
CARTER BARRON AMPHITHEATER BOX OFFICE — TU. 2-2620
Open Daily 10:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M.; Sun. 1:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.

Calloway Romps Thru a Revue at the Park

Cab Calloway, the old "heigh-de-ho miracle man," heads up a well-paced musical show at Carter Barron Amphitheater thru Sunday, and for them as likes Cab, they might take a hinge.

It's a sort of large-scale night club revue, the sort Cab operated at the old Cotton Club on Times Square when we were all children, and had to have a note from our parents to buy a glass of beer.

Cab hasn't changed a lick.

He still wears his white tail-coat as to the purple born, and uses his baton like an angry Sicilian would use his stiletto. I wonder if maybe he hasn't blinded some musicians with this weapon.

He has singers—notably Lonnie Sattin, who would be great if his stuff wasn't all goofed up with fancy arrangements—dancers, comics musicians and the Rev. Calloway disports himself thru a few fine numbers.

SAD GROUP

One of those horrible modern quartets appears—the Nightcaps, they call themselves. I wasn't sure if they were kidding or not, but their whole routine looked like a take-off on Sid Caesar's hilarious "The Crewcuts." The group is made up of three boy sopranos and a fellow who isn't sure whether he's a basso profundo or a hog-caller.

But once over this jump, the going is pretty good. Mr. Sattin knocks the socks off the "Stand Up and Fight" number from "Carmen Jones" and it jolts the joint.

The production numbers are good, if frantic, and I haven't seen such an amiable chorus since Jimmy Lake sold the old Gaiety to the legit interests.

A DYNAMO

Calloway, as always, is a dynamo on stage.

He jumps around and stomps and flails away with his baton like a madman, but the music comes out just fine. Whether his musicians ever pay any attention to him, I would not know, but he puts on a great show of band-leading.

Calloway's "Cotton Club Revue" will be followed at the Park by a passel of hill-billies from Nashville, Tenn., as the we had to import this commodity. They'll open Monday night.

JAMES O'NEILL, Jr.

Cab Calloway Revue Next in Central Park

Cab Calloway and his Cotton Club Revue will be the next attraction at Central Park's new Theatre Under the Stars. The show, featuring Calloway, Lonnie Sattin, George Kirby, the Norma Miller dancers and a company of 60, will open Tuesday evening after a paid preview on Monday.

Calloway and his troupe premiered at the Beachcomber, a Miami Beach night club, last December. The show moved to Las Vegas in April. It will wind up its stand there tomorrow night and then fly to Washington for a three-day engagement before coming to New York.

The date here will be indefinite, according to producer Michael P. Grace, and may continue through the summer. The cost of the package show was given at \$20,000 a week. "Rosalie," currently playing in the Central Park amphitheatre, gives its final performance Sunday evening.

Cab Calloway Revue Due in Central Park

Cab Calloway's Cotton Club Revue will follow "Rosalie" into Central Park's Theatre Under the Stars for two weeks starting the evening of July 9 after a paid preview Monday night. The revue, which originated this winter in Miami Beach, is currently in Las Vegas and is due Thursday at the Carter Barron Amphitheater, Washington, D.C., for four performances. It features Lonnie Sattin, known in some quarters as the new Harry Belafonte.

Unidentified clipping, July 3, 1957.

Note the photo is 21 year-old...



OPENING JULY 8th *Acclaimed by Press and Public
as the Greatest Cafe Show in the history of Miami Beach*

Murray Weinger's **Cotton Club**
revue

cast of
**50 Most Beautiful
Sepia Girls!**

Cab Calloway's Orchestra
Direction Eddie Barefield

STARRING

Cab Calloway

LONNIE SATIN

GEORGE KIRBY

NORMA MILLER
and her DANCERS

with

WILL GAINES

•
JOE CHISHOLM

•
ANJOEL TRIO

•
SAVAR DANCERS

•
COTTON CLUB
BEAUTIES

Production Staged,
Conceived by
Benny Davis

- SUPERVISED BY
MERVYN NELSON
- CHOREOGRAPHY,
CLARENCE ROBINSON



"Far and away the most
exciting, talent-packed
revue in all Cotton Club
history. Every thrilling act in
it is a show-stopper."
—N.Y. Courier, N.Y. Her. Trib.

"The Miami Beach Cotton Club is
mark 7."
—Earl Wilson, N.Y. Post

"A zingy production coupled
with exciting and talented
entertainment."
—The Washington Post

*Theatre under
the Stars*
IN
CENTRAL PARK

Every evening incl. Sunday at 8:45 P.M. Ticket information
call LEhigh 5-7373, JUDSON 2-9236. Telephone reservations
local brokers only. General admission \$1.15. Reserved seats
\$1.65, \$2.50, \$3.45 (includes tax). Mail order as above also
Theatre Under the Stars, 1619 Broadway, PLaza 7-2187. Box
offices: Wollman Memorial Theatre in Park—1680 Broad-
way bet. 52nd and 53rd Sts.—Californian Restaurant, 7th and
48th. Location in Park: WOLLMAN MEMORIAL THEATRE.
Entrances: 60th St. and 5th Ave., or 64 St. off 5th Ave., or
59th St. and 6th Ave.

Daily News, New York, July 3, 1957.

Note that Abbey Lincoln doesn't appear on the bill yet.

**Cab Calloway
Hits Monitor
Radio Sunday**

Daily Defender, Chicago,
July 6, 1957

"Monitor", the weekend pro-
gram on WMAQ will have a num-
ber of big names on its program
Sunday. Cab Calloway will be
heard in a discussion of his fu-
ture plans and the almost aban-
doned "High De Ho" at 4:00 p.m.
Miss Mae Davis, 5425 Wabash ave.
The guest list includes Cary
Grant, Maurice Evans, Sophie
Tucker, Cab Calloway, Bea Lillie,
Cyd Charisse, Billy De Wolfe,
Yvonne De Carlo and Rossano
Brazzi. Music will be played by
Oscar Peterson from the London
House in Chicago.

Opening Switch

Opening night for "The Beaux
Stratagem" at the Downtown
Theatre has been moved to Mon-
day in order not to conflict with
the Tuesday opening of the Cab
Calloway "Cotton Club Revue" in
Central Park.

Daily News, New York,
July 6, 1957

A smash in Miami Beach, a fabulous hit in Las Vegas
AND NOW, CRITICS RAVE IN NEW YORK
 Murray Weinger's **Cotton Club**
 revue

STARRING
Cab Calloway
LONNIE SATTIN
 and a cast of sixty

"A solid show. The sort of evening we've been waiting for." — *McClain, Journal-American*

"The dancers put enough energy into jiving, jumping and leg splits to keep a factory running for a week." — *Herridge, Post*

"Even the pigeons jump" — *Gelb, N. Y. Times*

"It's loud and fast and peppy. The girls are very attractive, the pace is swift and in a traditional tone." — *Donnelly, World-Telegram & Sun*

Theatre under the Stars
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Every evening Incl. Sunday at 8:45 P.M. Ticket information call LEhigh 5-7373, JUdson 2-9236. Telephone reservations local brokers only. General admission \$1.15. Reserved seats \$1.65, \$2.30, \$3.45 (includes tax). Mail order as above, also Theatre Under the Stars, 1619 Broadway, Plaza 7-2187. Box offices Wollman Memorial Theatre in Park—1680 Broadway bet. 52nd and 53rd Sts.—Californian Restaurant, 7th and 48th. Location in Park: WOLLMAN MEMORIAL THEATRE. Entrances 60th St. and 5th Ave. or 64 St. off 5th Ave. or 59th St. and 6th Ave.

Daily News, New York, July 12, 1957.
 Still Abbey Lincoln, but a featuring of Lonnie Satin

Daily News, New York, July 13, 1957.
 Abbey Lincoln finally appears but added on the wrong line, for Norma Miller "and her dancers"

NOW PLAYING Acclaimed by Press and Public as the Greatest
 Musical Show in the history of Miami Beach
 MURRAY WEINGER'S **Cotton Club**
 REVUE

Starring
CAB CALLOWAY
 Lonnie Sattin
 George Kirby
 Norma Miller
 Abbey Lincoln
 and her Dancers

with
 WILL GAINES
 JOE CHISHOLM
 ANJOEL TRIO
 SAVAR DANCERS
 COTTON CLUB BEAUTIES

Cab Calloway's Orchestra
 Direction: Eddie Barefield

Written, Staged and Con-
 ceived by Benny Davis
 Supervised By
 Mervyn Nelson
 Choreography,
 Clarence Robinson

"Far and away the most exciting, talent-packed revue in all Cotton Club history. Every thrilling act is a show-stopper." *My Gordan, N.Y. Her-Trib.*
 "The Miami Beach Cotton Club a smash." *Earl Wilson, N.Y. Post.*
 "A sizzling production peopled with exciting and talented entertainers." *Walter Winchell, N.Y. Mirror.*

AT
Theatre under the Stars
 IN **CENTRAL PARK**

Every evening Incl. Sunday at 8:45 P. M. Ticket information call LEhigh 5-7373, JUdson 2-9236. Telephone reservations local brokers only. General admission \$1.15. Reserved seats \$1.65, \$2.30, \$3.45 (includes tax). Mail order as above also Theatre Under the Stars, 1619 Broadway, Plaza 7-2187. Box offices Wollman Memorial Theatre in Park—1680 Broadway bet. 52nd and 53rd St. — ARTHUR MAISEL'S Californian Restaurant, 7th and 48th. Location in Park: WOLLMAN MEMORIAL THEATRE. Entrances 60th St. and 5th Ave. or 64 St. off 5th Ave., or 59th St. and 6th Ave.

Cab Calloway Revue Opens At Theater Under Stars

By Paul V. Beckley

Cab Calloway's "Cotton Club Revue," which opened last night at the Theater Under the Stars on Central Park's Wollman Skating Rink, is a revue in the night club sense, a kind of loosely-timed vaudeville. A number of individual performers might strike a Sunday-night television audience as skillful, agile or even exuberant, but following one another in no special sequence, some remaining as long as ten minutes, they added up to a shapeless evening.

Things got under way at night-fall, with a roll of drums, a couple of chords, much cymbal play and Mr. Calloway in a white outfit, singing something that began with, "In the world of hustle and bustle life is a song and dance." There is no mistaking the exuberance of Mr. Calloway. He looks good (and his orchestra can, if asked, sound good), but after this fast opening brush, Mr. Calloway kept to his baton most of the evening.

The evening quickly separated into a series of song and dance acts, including Will Gaines, a tap dancer with a phenomenal ability to drop on his ankles without cracking a bone; the Nitecaps, a "rhythm and blues"

singing group; and June Taylor, an acrobatic dancer of a the glass - balanced - on - forehead variety.

Lonnie Sattin, a singer who undoubtedly has feminine teenagers in mind, took over from this point, followed by Joe Chisholm, the final answer to addicts of baton twirling; and a semi-skit in which Mr. Calloway suddenly appeared as Romeo (high hose and lute in hand) and Norma Miller as a scratchy-voiced Juliet.

New York Herald Tribune, July 11, 1957

32 ROBERT COLEMAN'S THEATRE:

'Cotton Club Revue' Uncorks Nostalgia

By way of change of pace, Michael Grace and Chris Anderson brought Murray Weinger's "Cotton Club Revue of 1957" to their "Theatre Under the Stars" in Central Park Tuesday evening. It stars the one and only Cab Calloway, and features a flock of new talent.

As one of the Main Stem night gals who used to have to patrol the town's cafes till the wee hours back in the turbulent twenties and thirties, we got a nostalgic kick out of the new arrival. It was almost like sitting at a table again with Herman Stark, and watching Dan Healy emcee a glittering show for which young Harold Arlen had merely composed such a gem as "Stormy Weather."

BENNY DAVIS wrote and staged this one, with assists from Mervyn Nelson and Clarence Robinson. It scored sensational successes in Miami, Las Vegas, Washington and way stops. It was the gamut from sweet music to rock 'n' roll, from ballroom dancing to hot hooling.

Calloway, a top-flight showman, works like a beaver throughout the evening, only taking time out for wardrobe changes. And, believe us, he trots out everything his tailor thinks the well-dressed man should wear. He gets the proceedings away to a fast start with a snappy overture and a song called "Life," with the Nite-Kaps doing some fancy quartering in the background.

Willie Gaines offers speedy stepping, Joe Chisholm delivers a monologue while expertly twirling a dress cane, George Kirby proves that he's a master at impersonating the famous, Abbey Lincoln and Lonnie Sattin head the vocal brigade. For our money, Sattin is a cinch for stardom. He's bound to make some record company richer.

The Anjoel Trio, the Norma Miller and Savar Dancers, at the head of a line of good-looking Cotton Club girls, turned in some torrid terpsichore. "Rock and Roll Romeo" and "Call of the Wild," burlesques on Shakespeare and anthropology, left us a bit cold on a very warm night.

THE WEATHER MAN came through in fine style. He arranged a full moon that kept peeping out from behind clouds, wonderful New York showers until the last dance the Grace and Anderson like variety. They launched their season with a ballet and modern dance.

"Did the musical advertised as 'Rosalie'."

I have a hunch that Cab won't be able to fill the amphitheatre's 3,000 seats, either. The crowd last night was extremely thin.

Lost in Open Air

It isn't a bad show that Cab has brought to town. It's billed as virtually the same attraction which recently packed 'em into Miami and Las Vegas spots.

Yet, out in the open air, it doesn't pack much punch. You sorta miss the cigaret girls, the waiters stepping on your feet and the guy at the next table spilling a drink down your neck.

How about the Messrs. Grace and Anderson moving a few yards east to the duck pond and staging a water show?

Ho-Hum, No Hi-De-Ho In New Park Theatre

By CHARLES McHARRY

Doggone if they haven't gone and made that new outdoor theatre in Central Park into a nightclub. There's no whisky and no smoking at the Theatre Under the Stars, but up on the stage there's Cab Calloway and one of the biggest, longest night-club acts you ever sat through.

Cab hasn't slowed down much after all these years. He has about 20 sidemen in his band, which he keeps on stage, and they play with the old Calloway jump. The chorus line, called the Cotton Club girls, compares favorably with anything you'll find at the Latin Quarter or Copa these days.

I couldn't distinguish the June Taylor dancers from the Savar Dancers but I liked them all. Abbey Lincoln, a singer who's made a name for herself in club dates here in the last year, found Cab's band tough competition, but I suppose that will get straightened out with a few more performances.

Under Way at 9:10

Bounding out the show were Lonnie Sattin, a personable youngster who can warble, tap dancer Willie Gaines, a quartet of rock 'n' rollers called the Nitecaps and Joe Chisholm, the tireless cane twirler.

Last night's offering, which got



Cab, Abbey Lincoln Were in there trying

under way at a comfortable 9:10 was the third try by producers Michael P. Grace and Chris Anderson in the new park arena. Their initial program of ballet and interpretive dancing didn't have many customers and neither

Daily News, New York, July 10, 1957

Overmatched, Outdated 'Cotton Club Revue' Bows In N.Y.'s Central Park

The "Cotton Club Revue," born as a merry venture in Miami Beach last December, is probably one of the more successful café shows to hit the road. After a long run at its origination point, it took to the road for a Las Vegas stand, and has since branched away from the café routes for a fling in the legit channels.

Moving into the Theatre Under the Stars in New York's Central Park, the absence of smoke-filled rooms and a liquor glass apparently makes a tremendous difference. It isn't as resounding a show in the great outdoors as it was in the confines of a café. The Cotton Club type of entertainment, which reached its apex in the late '20s, at times shows its age, not through individual performances but through the lack of new ideas. It's virtually the same as during the Prohibition era, except that the world in general and Negro entertainment in particular have come a long way since Clarence Robinson first produced Cotton Club shows in its vintage era.

The late Murray Weinger, who operated the Miami Beach Cotton Club this past winter and who whipped this show into shape with the benefit of Robinson's dance direction, Mervyn Nelson supervision

Theatre Under the Stars

Cotton Club Revue, Murray Weinger production with Cab Calloway, Arthur Loochie, Leonie Seltin, Joe Chisholm, Willie Gaines, Audrey June Taylor, Norma Kays (N), Norma Miller Dancers, Cotton Club Girls (N), Savar Dancers, Anjoel Trio, Cab Calloway Duet, George Kirby. Written and staged by Murray Weinger, production supervised by Mervyn Nelson, dance direction, Clarence Robinson, choreography, Joel Noble, costumes, John Allen. At Theatre Under the Stars, Central Park, N.Y., July 8, 1957. \$2.00 top.

and writing-staging by Beany Davis, assembled a generally excellent cast for this show with Cab Calloway heading the list. For the New York run Abbey Lincoln replaced Sallie Blair.

Calloway, of course, who is a genuine holdover of the Cotton Club era, is a true sparkplug in this venture. He bawls with spirit, sings and romps and shows all-round excellence in every department. Of course, it would have helped the cause of the show greatly had he some writing to match his talents, as for example in the Romeo & Juliet sketch with Norma Miller. However, he's a voice of authority whenever on stage.

Leonie Seltin was starting to make a noise prior to being recruited for this display. He's a well-built lad with a vigorous voice who pours out a lot of feeling in his songs, even though he over-drips the schmaltz at times. Aside from doing too many numbers, there was little point in going over-dramatic in "I Believe." Otherwise he measures up well.

The acrobats by Audrey June Taylor and the taps by Willie Gaines go over well. The major comedy is by Joe Chisholm who should either concentrate on his baton twirling or get fresh material. The Nite Caps (4) rock 'n' roll several tunes for good effect.

By the time Miss Lincoln got around to her spot, it started to rain and any appraisal of her effectiveness would be unfair since the small crowd was milling about in search of shelter. George Kirby tried his impressions best but was stopped short.

The line routines are almost traditional. Robinson has been around for many years, and what was once a fresh and daring approach to line numbers has long since lost its brightness. The costumes are lively and colorful.

The single act is utilitarian and effective. But it seems that during the early part of the evening, before there was a sign of rain, the Theatre Under the Stars was one of the most impressive settings in New York. With the tall buildings on each side of the stage, and the moon between a couple of buildings, it seemed entertainment enough.

Aside from that, in another time and another era, the Cotton Club Revue would have been as potent in New York as it was in Miami Beach. But the world does move.

JOSE.

Variety, July 17, 1957

REVIEWS

BY DORIS HERING

The theatre is so often a world of fragility and change that it is reassuring once in a while to encounter indestructibility. This we did encounter in the season's fourth production, The Cotton Club Revue of 1957, starring Cab Calloway. If the 1957 had been changed to 1927, nothing would have been awry.

There were sequined high-kicking chorus girls (The Cotton Club Girls) and couples tossing each other about (The Anjoel Trio, The Norma Miller Dancers and the Savar Dancers). A loose-jointed tap dancer (Willie Gaines) finished his number with a chain of plummeting splits. An acrobatic lady (Audrey June Taylor) arched and split while balancing a glass on her brow. A debonair young man (Joe Chisolm) cracked jokes while twirling a baton, from hand to hand, behind his back, down his arm, between his legs. And he ended with an eccentric dance counterpointed by the endlessly spinning stick. Virtually everybody hurled themselves into a *Call of the Wild* complete with torches, live chickens, Watusi gear, witch doctors, warriors, maidens, and plenty of good old-fashioned frenzy.

Nor was the dance on this lively program confined only to those billed as dancers. A vocal quartet, The Nite-Kaps, pistoned their legs up and down, clapped, and swayed while different members of the group took turns at solos. And Cab Calloway created a spontaneous choreography of his own as he lunged and crouched and swung and wheeled about, using the catlike power of his entire body to command sound from his orchestra.

The program credited dance direction to Clarence Robinson and choreography to Joel Noble. We have no idea which was which. We were having too nostalgic a time watching old time vaudeville stunts skillfully performed.

THE END

Dance Magazine,
August 1957

'COTTON CLUB REVUE':

Solid Show Called Early-Rain

By JOHN McCLAIN

THE FATES HAVE NOT been kind to the spirited souls who wanted to bring a Summer of entertainment to Central Park. The first effort, ballet and brass, got off to an indifferent start; it was followed by "Rosalie," a revival which proved to be tragic; last night Murray Weinger's "Cotton Club Revue," with Cab Calloway, seemed headed for contention but was rained out just short of the sixth-furlong post.

This enterprise, which is staged in a wooden arena run

up over the Wollman Memorial Skating rink near 65th st., boasts a natural setting unrivaled in any land. There are the buildings surrounding Central Park, with their occasional lights, and last night there was a full moon temporarily shining down from a spot just left of the Chrysler tower.

Cab Calloway, always an in-

gratiating and skilled performer, came out and led his orchestra through a brilliant overture, and presently the big stage was filled with the Cotton Club Girls and some very good singers called the Nite-Kaps, and it seemed that we were off to the sort of evening we'd been waiting for.

A 'Rainy' Song

This impression was sustained through single numbers by Willie Gaines, Lonnie Sattin, Joe Chisolm—through a quite exciting ballet involving Leona Eppe, Norma Miller and a great many other very capable people—and was proceeding nicely when Audrey Lincoln was singing. Then the rain came.

The shower fell gently at first, and Miss Lincoln got through her spot, but then George Kirby started his impersonations (which are excellent), and just after he had concluded the Godfrey bit most of the clients had fled for shelter and Cab stopped the show.

Without having seen a full performance it is safe to say that this is certainly the sort of fare that should be presented to the Central Park comrades. It is strictly a variety show, but it has pace and style, and it has the capable services of Mr. Cab Calloway and his band to make the tempo. I will return, and will bring you another.

"COTTON CLUB REVUE OF 1957," at the Wollman Memorial, Central Park. Presented by Murray Weinger. Written and staged by Henry Davis. Supervised by Murray Weinger. Directed by Clarence Robinson. Choreography by Joe and Noble. Lighting by Dick Weiskopf and Sherrill Price.

THE CAST
Cab Calloway
Lonnie Sattin
George Kirby
Norma Miller
Audrey Lincoln
Willie Gaines
Joe Chisolm
The Angel Trio
The Baker Sisters
Cotton Club Girls

Across the Footlights

By Frances Hertridge

Cotton Club Comes to Central Park

Central Park's Theatre Under the Stars last night turned into a Night Club Under the Stars, with the premiere of Cab Calloway and his Cotton Club Revue.

It's just what you would expect of a Cotton Club Revue—a melee of jazz singing and dancing with a few jokes thrown in—quality stuff of its kind, but all in the popular tradition of night club routines.

The stars, unfortunately, gave way to rain just as the beautiful Audrey Lincoln was singing about how "the walls of Jericho came tumbling down." Police started pouring out of the place all during George Kirby's jokes in the next number. So Calloway finally called it quits with three numbers still to go.

But we had seen enough to get the idea. For some, in fact, more than enough. Such programs can quickly seem repetitious—and not for want of spirit.

The dancers put enough energy into their jiving and jumping and leg splits to keep a factory running for a week. In one big production number, "Call of the Wild," there was more activity than in a headload of new fish, and just about as much confusion. In style, it was about equal parts African primitive and American live, with some basic line action to perk up the jamboon. And on one side of the stage was Cab Calloway's band, keeping up their part of the general frenzy.

But even frenzy, without a change of pace, gets tiresome.

Then there is Lonnie Sattin, a handsome boy who is talked of as the new Elvis Presley. Like H. B., he sings hot riffs of life and

love. His singing is powerful and trusting, but it doesn't come through clearly as it might, or as true to pitch.

Another "almost" is Miss Lincoln. Tall and stonking, she looks like Lena Horne. When her voice has grown more mellow, she may sound like Miss Horne, too. But, at present, only

On the comic side is Joe Chisolm, who twice his name adequately as he tells such jokes as: "My best friend ran off with my wife last night and I miss him."

Through it all, introducing each number with compressed sporty life charms, is Calloway himself. He does his share to keep things lively. At one point he even does some classical stuff for a trawesty called "Rock and Roll Rumba," with Norma Miller as a big footed Juliet.

The mad Nitecaps and acrobatic dancer June Taylor have been added to the program as an extra treat.

New York Post,
July 10, 1957

'Cotton Club Revue'

Cab's New Show Under Stars

NEW YORK — In a bold attempt to save the faltering fortunes of the "Theatre Under the Stars" in Central Park, Cab Cal-

loway's "Cotton Club Revue" opened a one-week engagement this week.

The Calloway show comes into the park at a time when the operation was conceded to be in great difficulty. When the Cotton Club, which will have about 50 performers onstage, turned up, a deal was made quickly.

THERE HAD been a possibility of the revue going into the

Palace or Loew's State, however, it's felt that following the park appearance, the show could still be utilized in a vaudeville house.

In addition to Calloway, the show features Lonnie Sattin, the Norma Miller Dancers, George Kirby and others. The show was the surprise cafe click of Miami Beach last season and racked up tremendous grosses. This run was followed by a hit stay at the Royal Nevada in Las Vegas.



Pittsburgh Courier,
PA, July 10, 1957

June Taylor, the TV choreographer, is mad at Audrey June Taylor, the dancer performing with Cab Calloway and his show at Central Park's Theatre Under the Stars. The first Miss Taylor says the second Miss Taylor may be trading on her name and reputation and that she might sue

Daily News, New York,
July 12, 1957

'Cotton Club' Ends Sunday

"The Cotton Club Revue" will end its engagement on Sunday night at the Wollman Memorial Theatre in Central Park. This was made known last night at the office of the producers, Michael P. Grace and Chris F. Anderson. The show, which stars Cab Calloway and Lonnie Sattin, opened July 9. It could not be ascertained yesterday what the next attraction would be.

The New York Times,
July 10, 1957

“

“I FOUND IT VOCIFEROUSLY
ENTERTAINING WITH
THE MIKES TUNED UP
SO LOUD NOT A BIRD
IN THE PARK COULD SLEEP.”

—LANGSTON HUGHES

THEATRE UNDER THE STARS

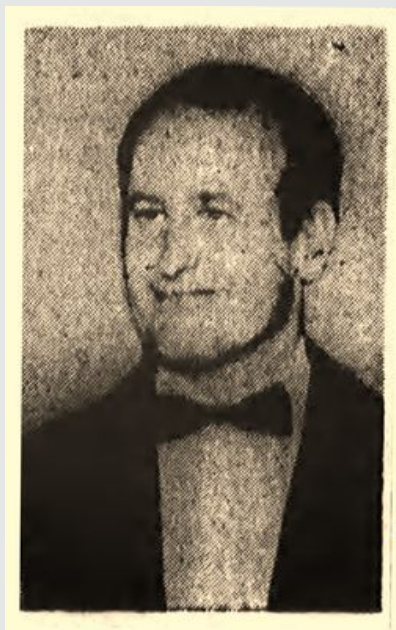
THE COTTON CLUB REVUE IN CENTRAL PARK



A unique photo by Robert Parent of the finale of The Cotton Club Revue at Theatre Under the Stars. Abbey Lincoln wears a pink gown.

Following a four-day visit to Washington, DC, with poor boxoffice, the tour arrives in New York. The initial plan was for them to perform at the renowned and highly sought-after Palace Theatre on Broadway, or the Loew's State. The revue is ultimately hosted by Theatre Under the Stars in Central Park.

After a ballet with Maria Tallchief and Carmen de Lavallade, and the revival of Gershwin's musical "Rosalie," with Mimi Benzel—which both underperformed there—the Cotton Club Revue was the third production to be presented "under the stars," and was anticipated to be "an improvement." However, the critics, the audience, and the weather decided otherwise.



*Producer and philanthropist
Michael P Grace II (1957)*

THE WEALTHY AND PHILANTHROPIC PRODUCERS

Chris F. Anderson and Michael P. Grace II (1917-1995) were the producers of Theatre Under the Stars in Central Park. It is worth noting that Grace was the grandson of the inaugural Catholic Mayor of New York. A prolific figure in the entertainment industry, Grace is recognized for his contributions as a lyricist, composer, author, and producer of multiple Broadway shows. Notably, Grace was a member of the famous Grace shipping and cruise company. His substantial wealth enabled him to make significant philanthropic contributions and to engage in ventures within the entertainment industry.

Anderson's stage work has been mostly in summer stock.

According to *The New York Times* dated March 26, 1957, "Between \$150,000 and \$200,000 is being raised to finance the project." Producer Grace stated for the same newspaper: "We want this to be a low-priced democratic theatre in one of the most beautiful settings in our city. We'd like it to be like the Opera under the Stars in Rome, where everyone—from leisure people to the hoi polloi—attends."

The next journalist's question adds a bit of irony to what would ultimately occur: "What happens if it rains?" Producer Grace replied: "If the downpour starts before most of the show is over, we'll hand out rain checks. Just like baseball."

THE VENUE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PARK

On March 6, and for the first time in its history, the New York City Parks Commission awarded Grace and Anderson the right to set up an amphitheater in Central Park on Wollman Memorial Skating Rink in which to produce summer musicals. Note that John Terrel, president of The Musical Arena Theatres Associates, owners of summer tent theatres in this country, threatened to start legal action against the city for approving such a plan, with mystery surrounding the awarding of the permit.



Photo by Morris Warman for The New York Herald Tribune (June 1, 1957)

Nevertheless, within 10 days, thanks to 150 workers and painters, the open-air playhouse was completed in time for its June 10 premiere. The place was designed by Eggers and Higgins—renowned architects for public housing projects, memorials, laboratories, etc. Designs for the stage have been made by Peggy Clark, a Broadway lighting expert.

The 3,750-seat wooden arena near 65th Street offers fantastic views of the buildings surrounding Central Park at a rather low-priced range, including taxes:

- 500 seats available at \$1.15
- 750 seats available at \$1.65
- 1,000 seats at \$2.30
- 1,500 seats at \$3.45.

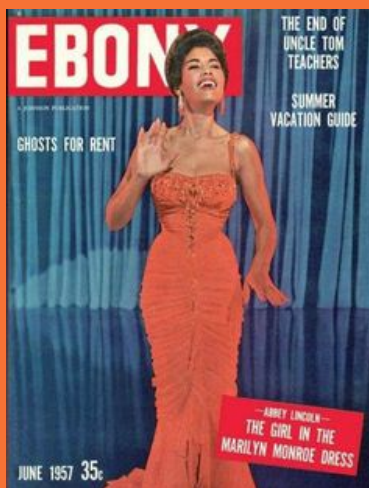
Under the terms of Grace and Anderson's contract with the Parks Commission, they were to erect the \$100,000 amphitheater structure and turn over 10 per cent of the gross to the city.

"Broadway has a new rival, Central Park!" claimed the *Chicago Daily Tribune* about the Theatre Under the Stars.



Daily News, July 7, 1957

A few years before singing "Freedom Now Suite" on her husband Max Roach's album "We Insist!", Abbey Lincoln (1930-2010) was a night-club singer whose repertoire was more of sex symbol and lounge singer than a dramatic jazz interpreter. In 1956 she appeared in the movie "The Girl Can't Help It," for which she wore a dress that had been worn by Marilyn Monroe in "Gentleman Prefer Blondes." In 1957, Abbey Lincoln is a typical nightclub singer in the Big Apple. In the present show, she has a special number, "The Battle of Jericho."



Abbey Lincoln had just appeared on last month's cover of Ebony.

The new female singer: ABBEY LINCOLN

For this series of performances, the cast of The Cotton Club Revue has changed a bit. Admittedly Sallie Blair raised the enthusiasm of many fans and not only for her vocal talents showcased in her first album released by Bethlehem "Squeeze Me," and was quickly promoted to many shows on her own. So, the 23-year-old Sallie was replaced by the 27-year-old Abbey Lincoln.

Unfortunately, even if she seems to appreciate the gig and the troupe, "Sexy Abbey Lincoln" (as written by *New York Age*) only gets mixed reviews: The reviewers think that she still lacks a bit of strength to front a big band. "Tall and stunning, she looks like Lena Horne. When her voice has grown more mellow, she may sound like Miss Horne too." (Frances Herridge, *New York Post*, July 10, 1957).

A few weeks after her engagement under the stars, Abbey would record her second album, "That's Him" with quite a different lineup consisting of Sonny Rollins on tenor sax, Kenny Dorham on trumpet, Wynton Kelly on piano, Paul Chambers on bass, and Max Roach on drums. The latter would soon become her husband. Abbey and Cab never met again.

Daily News, July 10, 1957



THE PREMIERE UNDER THE RAIN

"As one of the Main Stem night owls who used to have to patrol the town's cafés till the wee hours back in the turbulent twenties and thirties, we got a nostalgic kick out of the new arrival. It was almost like sitting at a table again with Herman Stark, and watching Dan Healy emcee a glittering show for which your Harold Arlen had merely composed such a gem as 'Stormy Weather.'" (Robert Coleman, "Cotton Club uncorks nostalgia," in *New York Mirror*, July 10, 1957).

Cab Calloway appeared on stage in a white outfit. His first song began with "In the world of hustle and bustle, life is a song and dance." Robert Coleman continues: "Calloway, a top-flight showman, works like a beaver throughout the evening, only taking time out for wardrobe changes. And, believe us, he trots out everything his tailor thinks the well-dressed man should wear."

John McClain from *New York Journal-American* (July 10, 1957) pursues: After a "brilliant overture, and presently the big stage was with the Cotton Club Girls and some very good singers called the Nite-Kaps [specially added for the New York gig], and it seemed that we were off to the sort of evening we'd been waiting for."

The same issue already happened for the premiere of "Rosalie" last June 26: "The stars, unfortunately, gave way to rain just as the beautiful Abbey Lincoln was singing about how 'The walls of Jericho came tumbling down.' Folks started pouring out of the place all during George Kirby's jokes in the next number. So Calloway finally called it quits with three numbers still to go." (Frances Herridge).

Hopefully, Audrey June Taylor's acrobatic number, consisting of dancing with a glass of water perched on her forehead, had been fully completed...

"How about moving a few yards east to the duck pond and staging a water show?" concluded Charles McHarry (*Daily News*, NY, July 10, 1957).

The curse of the rain hit The Cotton Club Revue on the dress rehearsal on July 8 and the night of the premiere, on July 9.

The remaining evenings until July 21 went under a cloudy sky, with a small attendance.

THE REVUE UNDER THE BAD REVIEWS

The revue has a mixed critical and public welcome. But how to fulfill 3,800 outdoor seats—the outdoor location undoubtedly affects a lot of the music's punch... "You sorta miss the cigaret girls, the waiters stepping on your feet and the guy at the next table spilling a drink down your neck." (Charles McHarry). Plus, the jokes and numbers that work in a Miami cabaret are sometimes snubbed by the New York critics.

"It's just what you would expect of a Cotton Club Revue melee of jazz singing and dancing with a few jokes thrown in—quality stuff of its kind, but all in the popular tradition of night club routines. (...) Such programs can quickly seem repetitious—and not for want of spirit." (Frances Herridge).

Critic Paul V. Beckley noted that the show was "a revue in the night-club sense, as a kind of loosely-timed vaudeville" and that the individual performances "might strike a Sunday-night television audience as skillful, agile or even exuberant, but following one another in no special sequence, some remaining as long as ten minutes, they added up to a shapeless evening."

"The dancers put enough energy into their jiving and jumping and leg splits to keep a factory running for a week. In one big production number, 'Call of the Wild,' there was more activity than in a boatload of new fish, and just about as much confusion." (Frances Herridge).

The show was described as having a "natural setting unrivaled in any land" (*New York Journal-American*, July 22, 1957, by John McClain), but the critique suggests a lack of cohesion in the overall program.

The worst review came from *Variety* (July 17, 1957), qualifying the revue as "Outwatched, outdated," condemning the "lack of new ideas. It's virtually the same as during the Prohibition era, except that the world in general and Negro entertainment in particular have come a long way since Clarence Robinson first produced Cotton Club shows in its vintage era."



Cab Calloway's energy on the stage of the Theatre Under the Stage, captured by Robert Parent.

Lead singer Lonnie Sattin was barely noticed, acting like a little Harry Belafonte and seen as "a singer who undoubtedly has feminine teenagers in mind."

The headliner of the revue received nice if not condescending reviews:

- "Cab hasn't slowed down much after all these years. He has about 20 sidemen in his band, which he keeps on stage, and they play with the old Calloway jump" (Charles McHarry).
- "There is no mistaking the exuberance of Mr. Calloway. He looks good (and his orchestra can, if asked, sound good), but after this fast-opening rush, Mr. Calloway kept to his baton most of the evening." (Paul V. Beckley in *New York Herald Tribune*, July 11, 1957).
- "Calloway, of course, who is a genuine holdover of the Cotton Club era, is a true spark plug in this venture. He batons with spirit, sings and romps and shows all-around excellence in every department." (*Variety* July 17, 1957).
- "Through it all, introducing each number with congenial Sportin' Life charm, is Calloway himself to do his share to keep things lively." (Frances Herridge).

"The Cotton Club Revue was the only show [in the Theatre Under the Stars program] toward which critics and customers showed any tolerance, whatsoever." (*Billboard*, July 29, 1957).

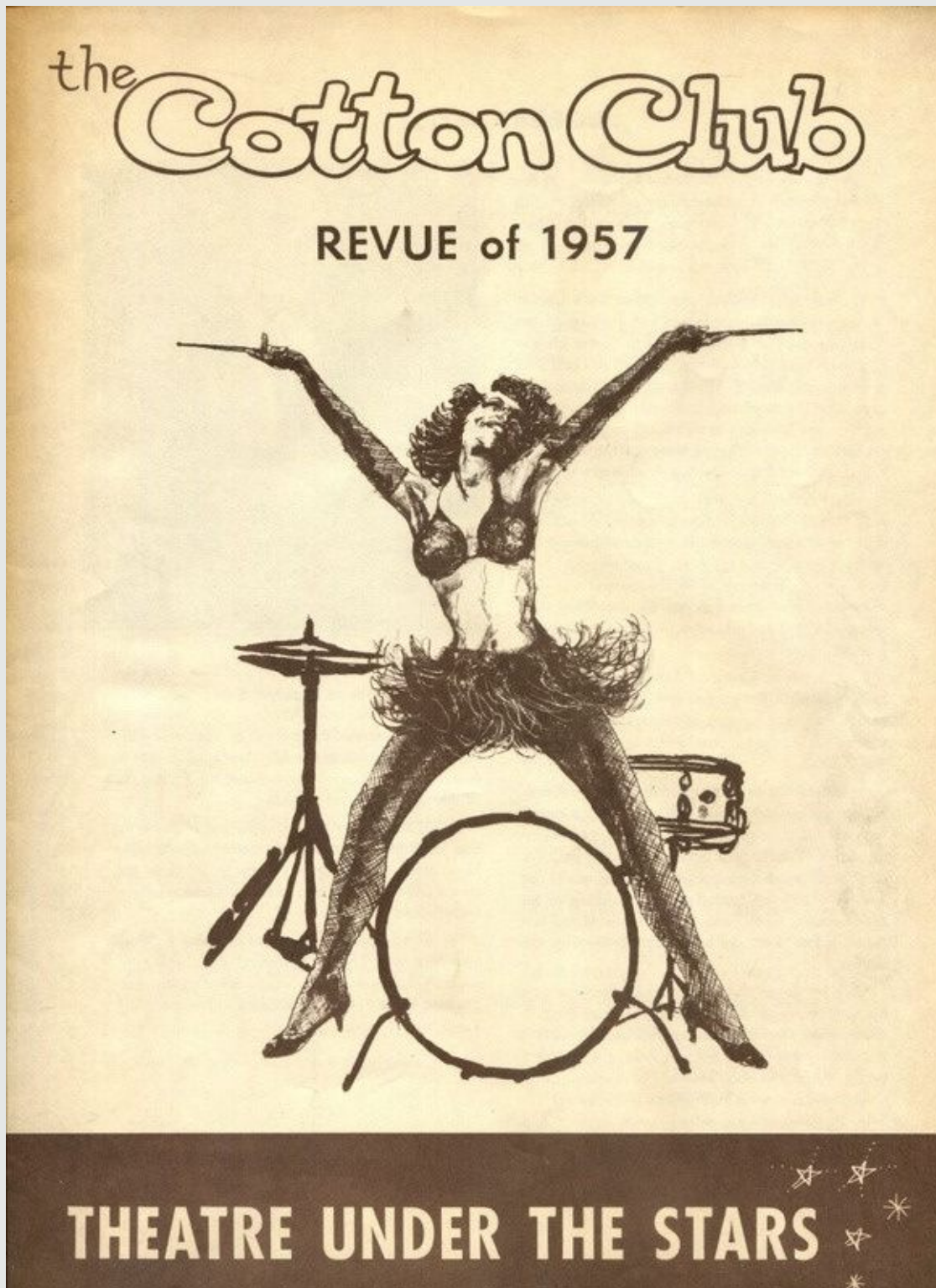
AND NOW, JAZZ UNDER THE STARS

After several tryout productions, Michael Grace finally found the winning formula with this successful packaged show billed "Jazz Under the Stars." They lined up a big-name jazz package to follow The Cotton Club Revue, whose lineup changed every week until the end of summer: Billie Holiday, Gerry Mulligan's Quartet, George Shearing's Sextet, Lester Young, Miles Davis, Joe Jones, Sonny Stitt, Dinah Washington and the Modern Jazz Quartet, Max Roach, Jo Jones and Buddy Rich for a drum battle, and the Kai Winding Septet, ending with Lionel Hampton on the first week of September... Al 'Jazzbo' Collins and Jean Shepherd were masters of ceremony. It is said that some of the performers said, "If the wind's blowing north, our sound will reach 125th Street faster than the A-Train!"

Meanwhile, the tour of The Cotton Club Revue paused for a well-deserved vacation during August, far away from Harlem and Central Park...

FROM OUR VAULT

SOUVENIR PROGRAM



Murray Weinger's
COTTON CLUB REVUE
 of 1957
Starring
CAB CALLOWAY

WITH
LONNIE SATTIN, GEORGE KIRBY, NORMA MILLER and ABBEY LINCOLN

Written, Staged and Conceived by **BENNY DAVIS**

Entire Production Supervised by **Mervyn Nelson**

Dance Direction by **Clarence Robinson**

I. OVERTURE

conducted by Cab Calloway

II. "LIFE"

sung by Cab Calloway and The Nite-Kaps

danced by The Anjoel Trio

The Norma Miller Dancers

The Savar Dancers

and The Cotton Club Girls:

Yvonne Blanchard, Bobbie Day, Theodora Boyd,
 Lea Means, Del Boyd, Dee Dee Lynn, Barbara
 Thomas, Marti Lane, Dolores Boyd, Leona Egan,
 Romy Young, Joan Myers

III. WILLIE GAINES

"Motion in High Gear"

IV. LONNIE SATTIN

"The Vocal Volcano"

V. JOE CHISOLM

"A Gentleman, His Hat and His Cane"

VI. "ROCK AND ROLL ROMEO"

Cab Calloway as Romeo

Norma Miller as Juliet

VII. "CALL OF THE WILD"

The Civilized Man

His Civilized Wife

The Kidnapped Virgin

Her Warrior Lover

The Watani Queen

The Watani King

The Idol of Love

The Witch Doctor

The Queen's Dancers

Lonnie Sattin

Leona Egan

Terri Vann

André Pitts

Norma Miller

Stoney Mastroni

Sonny Til

Joel Noble

Barbara Lauren

Terris Harris, Fritsilla Spencer

The Savar Dancers

HONORARY COMMITTEE

HOWARD CULLMAN

MRS. HENRY GOLDMAN JR.

BLEVINS DAVIS

ANITA LOOS

CYRIL RITCHARD

The Tribal Warriors Billy Ricker,
Charles Young, Raymond Scott
The King's Guards Frank Todd, Gerald Rudenkin,
Albert Russell, Billy Adams
The Maidens The Cotton Club Girls

VIII. ABBEY LINCOLN

IX. GEORGE KIRBY
"I Hope I Make an Impression"

X. CAB CALLOWAY
The King of "Hi De Ho"
"Evadine" Michelle Clark

XI. "DOIN' THE TOWN"
sung by The Hot-Kaps
danced by The Anjoel Trio, Norma Miller Dancers,
Saver Dancers and The Cotton Club Girls

XII. "REMEMBER THESE!" (Finale)
Cab Calloway introduces
George Kirby
Abbey Lincoln
Willie Gaines
Joe Chisolm
Lennie Sutton
Michelle Clark
and the Entire Company

Credits

Choreography by Joel Noble
Costumes designed by John Allen
Costumes executed by Variety Costumes
Lighting executed by Dick Wedikins & Sherrell Price
Stage Manager Roy McCormick
Orchestrations & Arrangements Eddie Barefield
Captain of Cotton Club Girls Morti Lane
Featured Show Drummer Michael Silva
National Press Relations (for Cotton Club) Simmons Associates
Scenic Execution Film Art Corp.
Rehearsal Pianist Frank Owens
National Press Relations Simmons Associates

STAFF

Company Manager Roy Jones
House Manager Al Rosen
Lighting supervised by James Orr
Ticketeers by Eggers & Higgins
Advertising Representative Hilton & Eggie
Promotion Advisor Lorenz Fields
Master Carpenter Edward Hauck
Master Electrician Joseph Devlin
Master of Properties Mac Landrum
Master of Sound Sam Salzman
Treasurer Allan Schaeffer
Assistant Treasurers Edward Lynch
John Ring
Chief of Staff Mac Ruppert
Wardrobe Mistress Ellen Tierney

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"Far and away the most sexciting, talent-packed revue in all Cotton Club history. Every thrilling act is a show-stopper."

Hy Gardner—N. Y. Herald-Tribune

"The Miami Beach Cotton Club a smash."

Earl Wilson—N. Y. Post

"A zingy production peopled with exciting and talented entertainers."

Walter Winchell—N. Y. Mirror

"The best all-around entertainment in Miami Beach."

Doug Watt—N. Y. Daily News

"The fastest, merriest, most inspiring sepia entertainment assembled in decades."

Frank Farrell—N. Y. World-Telegram

"One of the most exciting shows ever presented on a cafe floor."

The Diners' Club Magazine

"Never have we heard such wild adjectives of customer praise."

Paul Bruun—Miami Beach Sun

THEATRE UNDER THE STARS

AUGUST 1957



Cab Calloway always happier
at the race track than on stage,
on August 13, 1957.
(photo by Burns Photography, Inc)

AUGUST 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

1-15

Vacation

13

Race track, Schenectady, NJ

16-22

On the same bill with Bill Doggett's band, Club Bolero (1,500 seats), Wildwood, NJ

18

Featured guest appearance (2 songs) on the Ed Sullivan Show (S9, Ep 47), New York, NY

19

Cab's convertible car slashed while parked on the curb adjacent to the Club Bolero, Wildwood, NJ

23

Cab and his musician Chester Smith are pinched for speeding (70 m.p.h – 10 miles above) in separate cars, Garden State Parkway, Cranford, NJ

23-25

The New Stage Coach Inn, Hackensack, NJ

29-Sept 4 (8:30 pm)

Backed by Mal Malkin and his orchestra or Bernard Marks and his orchestra, along with Bobby Sargent and Lois O'Brien, Café Pompeii, Eden Roc, Miami, FL

?? (late August or early September)

Cab presides "The Sneezers" awards ceremony (for hay fever sufferers), Eden Roc, Miami, FL



PRIMITIVE MOVEMENT — Veteran theatrical performer Cab Calloway gets in the mood with North Carolina's "Nature Girl", Jim Dorothy Brown on Ed Sullivan's television show last Sunday. Nature girl went back to the Carolina backwoods but Cab remained. (Photo by Newsday)

New York Age, Aug 31, 1957

line. — WITH "PORGY AND BESS" as a film assured the speculation on possible roles continues with "Sporting Life" as main controversial argument. — TO DATE CAB CALLOWAY who had staged role in world wide trek and Sammy Davis, jr. are the leaders in the gussing campaign. ONE OTHER controversial role is "Bess" with Leontyne Price who quit for the concert circuit being prominently mentioned. — CHICAGO'S

The Chicago Defender,
Aug 6, 1957



CAB CALLOWAY

Starting August 16

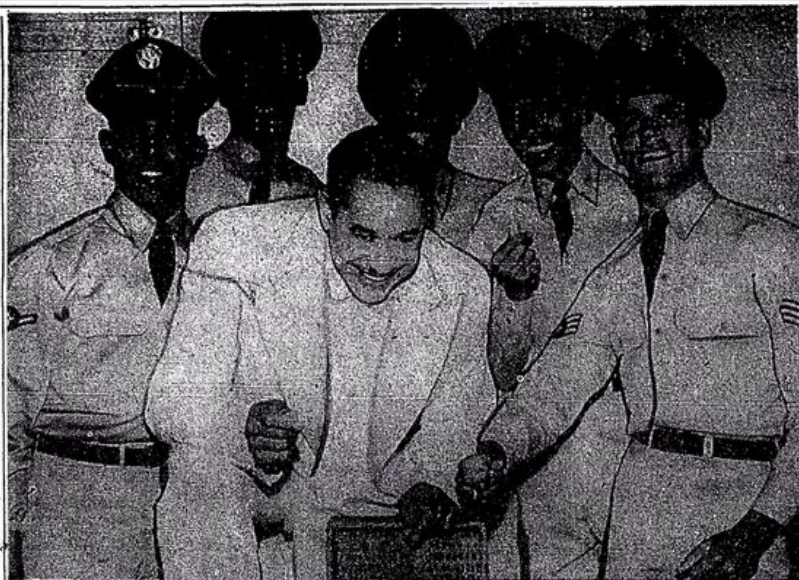
CLUB BOLERO, Wildwood, N. J.

and August 18

ED SULLIVAN SHOW, CBS-TV

Mgt. BILL MITTLER, 1619 Broadway, New York

Variety, Los Angeles, CA, Aug 14, 1957



CAB CALLOWAY, star of the Central Park Theatre Under the Stars production of "Cotton Club" sports a smile of approval as he pre-views platter of the sensational, new all Air Force vocal group, the "Glowtones," who were just awarded a professional recording contract. The "Glowtones," from left to

right, A-3C Henry Fisher, Washington, D.C.; A-B Landon Hill, Norfolk, Va.; A-3C Lewis Johnson, Philadelphia, Pa.; A-1C James Watkins, Martinsville, Va.; and A-1C Robert Santiago, New York City. All are stationed at Manhattan Beach Air Force Station.

The Afro-American, Baltimore, MD, Aug 3, 1957

CAB CALLOWAY
HEADLINES

THE
ED SULLIVAN
SHOW



Sunday, Aug. 18
7:00 P.M.

- ★ JANET BLAIR
Singer — Actress
- ★ DICK CONTINO
Accordionist
- ★ THE TRIO MOLIDORS
European Variety Act
- ★ SUE CARSON
Comedienne
- ★ CONNIE TOWERS
Singer
- ★ ELIZABETH & COLLINS
Unusual Acrobatic
Knife Throwing Team

Leaders in the world
of sports

and many other ★ ★ ★
Sponsored by

GRICE

MOTORS, Inc.

Your LINCOLN-MERCURY
Dealer

Leader Tribune, Marion, IN, Aug 17, 1957

Club Owner Sues Orchestra Leader

LAS VEGAS — Scheduled to appear in justice court here today is orchestra leader Cab Calloway who is being sued by the owner of a westside club for \$300.

Z. Louis, owner of the club, claims that Calloway borrowed the money from him last April and has refused to pay him back. Calloway, who was in New York City last night, has maintained that the money represents a gambling debt and is not collectable.

Justice of Peace Art Olsen said that he has not heard from the orchestra leader but doubts that he will appear as scheduled because of an engagement in the East.

Calloway Pinched Tooting at 70 Per

Band leader Cab Calloway and one of his musicians, Chester Smith, were pinched for speeding in separate cars on the Garden State Parkway at Cranford, N. J., yesterday. The arresting trooper said they were hitting 70 m.p.h.—10 miles over the parkway limit. They posted \$35 bail pending appearance in court Sept. 3.

N.B.: Chester was the road manager and Cab's driver.

Cab Calloway's Car Slashed In Wildwood

WILDWOOD, Aug. 19 — The top of entertainer Cab Calloway's convertible was slashed with a sharp instrument early this morning. Calloway said he parked his car at 1 a.m. at the curb adjacent to the Bolero where he is appearing and when he returned at 2:25 a.m. the top had been slashed

Press of Atlantic, NJ, Aug 20, 1957

The Record, Hackensack, NJ, Aug 23, 1957

OPENING FRI. . . . Limited Engagement

OPENING FRIDAY

CAB CALLOWAY

Held Over

PADDY DeMARCO

and

ALLIE STOLTZ with SHARON LEE

The NEW Stage Coach Inn

W.S. Route 46, S. HACKENSACK, N. J. 5 mi. from George Wash. Bridge

FREE PARKING Member Diners' Club HUbbard 9-4040

Nightly Dorothy Jackson Plus All-Star Show

Special Catering Package Plan **\$2.75** per person

Daily News, New York, NY, Aug 24, 1957
Reno Gazette Journal, TX, Aug 19, 1957

LANGSTON HUGHES

Week By Week



All On A Summer's Day — Out Manhattan Way

New York's new Theatre-Under-the-Stars at the downtown end of Central Park is a charming place to spend a summer evening.

Just off the lake and surrounded by trees, it has a backdrop of real skyscrapers behind it, dotted with skyhigh lights at night.

Recently I saw there Cab Calloway's "Cotton Club Revue of 1957" and found it vociferously entertaining with the mikes tuned up so loud not a bird in the park could sleep.

Abbey Lincoln was lovely to look upon; Lonnie Satin sang in no uncertain fashion; Norma Miller danced amusingly, and Cab possessed his usual personality - plus, a very fine showman, indeed.

But the hit of the show for me was George Kirby — maybe because he made the least noise — with his subdued but quite wonderful imitations of Joe Louis, Pearl Bailey, and other current personalities. He is a very humorous and talented young man, and got the biggest hand of the evening the night I was there.

The Chicago Defender, IL, Aug 3, 1957

The Miami News, FL, Aug 29, 1957

OPENING TONITE!

EDEN ROC

PRESENTS IN THE

CAFE POMPEII

"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SUPPER CLUB IN THE WORLD"

CAB CALLOWAY

Star of the
Cotton Club Revue

Songs by

LOIS O'BRIEN

Comedy by
**BOBBY
SARGENT**

see you at **harry's
american bar**

45th St. & Collins

Reservations:
Jacques JE 2-2441

Never a cover • Open from 12 noon to 2 A.M.
Gay Cocktail Hour

CHICO and the Havana Cuban Boys
The fabulous piano styling of JOHNNY COSTA
& his TRIO direct from the Embers in New York

Nightclubs: Eden Roc

The years are piling up on Cab Calloway but the old hi-de-hi, hi-de-ho fire is still there and he's a standout in the current show in the Eden Roc's Cafe Pompeii.

Cab, who helped make the Cotton Club revue a success last season, stays with his standbys, "Summertime," "Black Magic," "St. James Infirmary," "One More For the Road," "Miss Otis Regrets" and his trademark, "Minnie the Moocher."

He's nimble on his feet and keeps moving around the large stage and at times breaks into a fast dance.

It's the same act he's been doing for years but it still looks fresh.

The Miami News, FL, Aug 30, 1957

Cab Calloway's a Marvel

WE CAN'T RECALL just how many years we've been hearing Cab Calloway sing "Minnie the Moocher" but after hearing him do it at his current stand at the Eden Roc Hotel Cafe Pompeii we know that it hasn't been long enough. This man is just a marvel of vitality and must be heard to be believed.

But it isn't all "Minnie" with Cab, who is in solo date here. There is, of course, his other trademark tune — "St. James Infirmary," to which he has added "Black Magic," "Miss Otis Regrets," "Summertime" and some others for the sum total of an exciting 40 minutes.

Filling out the bill are Lois O'Brien, featured lead in the touring company of "The King and I" who shows potential for big cafe things after she hits a more relaxed tempo, and Bobby Sargent, who among other funny business, rocks his audience with the greatest Groucho Marx takeoff we've seen this side of Groucho.

The Miami Herald, FL, Aug 31, 1957

TO CAB OR NOT TO CAB

THE “HI-DE-HO ROMEO” NUMBER



Norma ‘Juliet’ Miller and Cab ‘Romeo’ Calloway doing their successful skit. Cab’s outfit is now in the collections of the Smithsonian, at the NMAAHC.

The success of the revue was immediate. Some acts attracted more attention than others, including one where Cab was dressed as Shakespeare with a guitar and did a duet number with Norma Miller on the theme of Romeo and Juliet. The same idea had already been exploited in the thirties at the Cotton Club.

IT ALL STARTED IN HARLEM IN 1937...

Undoubtedly inspired by the recent and successful lavish movie “Romeo and Juliet” (1936, MGM) by George Cukor with Leslie Howard and Norma Shearer, “Hi De Ho Romeo” was written by Benny Davis and Fred Coots. Recorded on August 31, 1937, the song was created for the 2nd Cotton Club Parade of September 1937. This was used as the ending of a comedic skit duet between Cab and his singer of the moment: at the Cotton Club—Mae Johnson, and on tour, Avis Andrews (read our full-length profiles for both artists on our website). Cab was dressed “as a red-cloaked Romeo and the lovely Avis Andrews as the adorable swing-singing Juliet” (New Pittsburgh Courier, clipping, “Cab’s New Romeo and Juliet Starts ‘Jitterbugs’ Shaking,” by Reginald A. Fisher, May 14, 1938). Variety’s columnist stated that the number contained “a few lines which could never be used on the air” (March 16, 1938).

The original song went this way:
*I'm just a Hi-De-Ho Romeo
 Lookin' for a Juliet.
 At this Barrymore bus'ness
 I may be new,
 But up in Harlem
 I'll teach Brother John a thing or two...*

Widely publicized, the routine mixed "Shakespeare, Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen, and a Chinese laundry list" (Mary Winn, in Fort Worth Star-Telegram, July 3, 1938). Many reviewers highlighted it during the Manhattan revue and the following tour, such as Len G. Shaw from the Detroit Free Press: "Climaxing the fine show, Cab himself and Miss Andrews team up to provide a delightful bit of song nonsense, 'The hi-de-ho Romeo'" (May 7, 1938). Others would simply call it "buffoonery" or "bright satire"...

Lowell Lawrance from the Kansas City Journal added, "It may start Shakespeare spinning in his grave, but the audience loves it." So, if the public enjoyed it, why not satisfy them!

ROMEO IS STILL IN CAB'S MIND...

In the 1946 book "How to sing and sell popular songs," Cab Calloway's chapter indicated that he was currently working on a swing score for "Romeo and Juliet." The demanding audience would have to wait for 10 years...



JET, January 10

SHAKESPEARE-UPON-MIAMI

Here we go again in 1956 with the following season of The Cotton Club Revue and the "Hi de ho Romeo" routine, presented as if it were a brand-new sketch... "If the number hasn't already appeared in a Broadway show, it should. It's that good" (Miami News, Dec 25, 1956).

The 1937 song by Benny Davis was replaced by an updated "Rock 'n' Roll Romeo." We haven't been able to trace its lyrics or music, although the sheet music was officially published by J.J. Robbins Music (it could be a creation, since a copyright entry dated August 1956 indicated another song identically titled with music by John Pennington Richards and words by Richard Mullan, published by Copar Music, Inc).

According to Cabaret (August 1957), "In the best Cotton Club tradition, everything had style and taste, especially in the gaily risqué 'Rock 'n' Roll Romeo' sequence."

Norma Miller remembered in her memoirs "Swingin' at the Savoy": "We did a skit based on Romeo and Juliet in which I played Juliet opposite Cab Calloway as my 'Rock 'n' Roll Romeo.' He entered carrying a guitar and wearing a short jacket, a large hat with colorful plumes, and bright yellow tights! I was up in the window of the castle looking down, and I nearly cracked up when I saw him. It was a great show, a genuine parody of Elvis's rock then in vogue."

Here's an excerpt of the naughty dialogue:

Cab (Romeo): When I climb her balcony, it stays climbed.

Norma Miller (Juliet) arrives and requests to hear some Rock 'n' Roll.

Cab: I'm not Elvis the Pelvis.

Norma: No, you're not even his brother Eenis.

Cab pleads with her to flee with him across yon causeway, where they'll find a motel.

Cab: A motel is a hotel with the honor system: no house detectives.

Then Cab sang the "Rock 'n' Roll Romeo," which the easy-to-please writer for Cabaret called "probably the funniest number to be sung in a club show in the past 15 years."

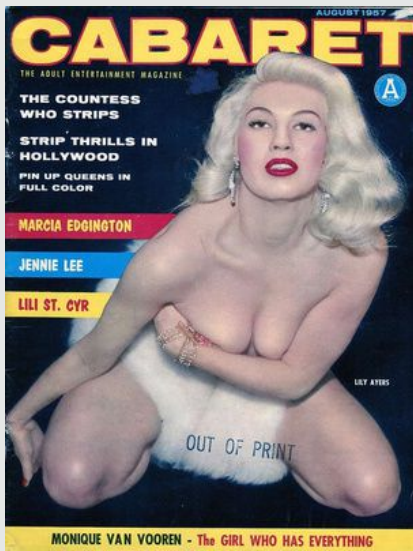
Hopefully, Sammy Hagar's 1976 song titled "Rock 'n' Roll Romeo" had strictly no connection with Benny Davis's masterpiece...



“

“I’M NOT
ELVIS
THE PELVIS.”

—*Cab ‘Romeo’ Calloway*



COMES BACK

Fabulous revue of '30's comes to life in Miami Beach featuring fast tempo black and tan acts that even surpass those that rocketed club to success in early days.



BEVY OF BRONZED BEAUTIES plus cool crew of music-makers, back up red-headed singing rage, Sallie Blair, and all-time great, Cab Calloway (below), who stars in CC's hot revue.

By Morton Cooper

ANITERY legend was born in New York City's Harlem during the early years of the depression. The legend was called the Cotton Club. Interwoven among the threads were the beginnings of fabulous careers and the first airings of songs that were to live for years to come. Such tuneful titans as "Stormy Weather," "World on a String," "Don't Worry About Me," and "I Love a Parade" were launched from the Cotton Club stage by a corps of young entertainment giants which included Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong, Ethel Waters, The Berry Brothers, Duke Ellington, Lena Horne, and Dorothy Dandridge (who was then one-third of The Dandridge Sisters).

Then the wondrous club with its fabulous revues died in 1933. Hoodlum infiltration and race troubles killed it. Today, however, the Cotton Club revues live again, shining with a brilliance that has even surpassed the luster of the first edition. No less an authority than the great Cab Calloway says, "This show inherits its vigor and vitality from the old



SPURRING fast-paced revue, Sepian beauties exercise lithe limbs to heady rock 'n roll rhythm. After six SRO months at Miami Beach, fabulous show packed Las Vegas' plush Royal Nevada. It is currently headed for New York's Palace Theater.





FLASHING GOLD-LINED SKIRTS and gleeful smiles, three of eight Cotton Club dancers enthrall audience with sparkling Calypso number. Squeezing multitude of delightful talent into two hilarious hours, all-Negro extravaganza includes total of 48 performers.

Cotton Club, and then takes it from there. The movement is fast, it's chuck full of fun, the kids know what they're doing, and they fit right in. It's a fast thing with talent. There's the secret."

Reviving a legend that has been virtually dormant for 18 years takes a powerful lot of doing. The show's opening in Miami in December, 1956, didn't just happen. Murray Weinger, who had bossed some first rate cafes in his time, had been on a professionally losing streak for six years but was nevertheless regarded as one of the most astute cabaret men in the country. Reviving The Cotton Club was his idea—not just to come out with an all-Negro show with the title tacked on, but a genuine reproduction of the mood and tempo he'd remembered seeing in Harlem. He called on Clarence Robinson, the original production supervisor, and felt him out on the chances of bringing the show back to life. Robinson thought it might work.

They, with writer-director Benny Davis, conferred for

fully six months before they told anyone their plan. When they did, the 20-to-1 betting began; the possibility of such a thing clicking in Miami, of all places, was mighty dim. The night life competition was rugged; other spots had to hire top names at Fort Knoxian salaries and, even so, were often lucky if they just broke even. The plush new hotels on the Beach were offering mountain-sized night clubs within their hotels, and straight clubs, with no room rent profit to cover the possible loss in a week's business, had either to click fast or fold fast, with no in-betweens allowed.

And the seemingly biggest deterrent of all was that Negro shows had never done well in Miami Beach.

Weinger had faith, kept saying "We're going to make it work"—especially when it looked as though it couldn't work—and ignored the wisecracks who told him he was crazy. He opened it despite the wisecracks with a \$17,000 nut. He recreated a large chunk of the original club's flavor by placing checkerboard tablecloths on the tables

LEAPING FURIOUSLY, painted savage (right) hovers above victim in vividly dramatic ritual. Long-stemmed chorines (below), seemingly viewing act through floor, are actually giggling at "No Pets Allowed" sign above.



and by serving simple menus of fried chicken and spare ribs. He kept his food or drink minimum down to \$3.50 per person.

Within the first ten days, 30,000 customers had seen the show—some of them for the second and third times. Almost instantaneously it became the *My Fair Lady* of night clubs. It had opened with a bang and word of mouth spread it into the hit class. It became the first club show in Miami since 1941 to have an evening third show.

It hauled the patrons in—as it's doing now—because its tight construction allowed not a second of lag or stage wait. It frowned on encores because it wanted to race like the wind, getting the act on to do its stuff and then following it instantly with a bigger and better act. The art of "topping" had come back.

In the best Cotton Club tradition everything had style and taste, especially in the gaily risqué "Rock 'n' Roll Romeo" sequence. Here, Calloway appears in a blonde wig, yellow tights, short brocaded jacket and a guitar, and sidles to (Continued on page 55)



cotton club

(Continued from page 15)

Juliet's balcony. "When I climb her balcony," he announces, "it stays climbed." Juliet—played by Norma Miller—arrives and requests to hear some rock 'n' roll. "I'm not Elvis the Pelvis," apologizes Cab. "No," affirms Miss Miller, "you're not even his brother Eenis." Cab pleads with her to flee with him across yon causeway, where they'll find a motel ("A motel," he explains, "is a hotel with the honor system. No house detectives"), and the "Rock 'n' Roll Romeo" song—probably the funniest number to be sung in a club show in the past 15 years—begins.

Weinger saw and listened to the excitement of the premiere customers and knew at once that he'd hit pay dirt. It had all the ingredients that went into appealing to everyone, a show that could play anywhere and for as long as he chose to run it. He made plans almost immediately to move the production from the former Beachcomber, which seats 1100, to the former Copa City, which can seat 3000. It was simply going to be a matter of waiting for a liquor license.

The license came through, but Murray Weinger didn't know it. Three weeks after his biggest smash opened, a sudden heart attack killed him.

There was a kind of awful irony involved; a good guy, a man of vision and deep loyalty, Murray Weinger had been called washed up for the past half dozen years, and he'd desperately needed this break. Intimates today will tell you that it was Rusty, his attractive, courageous wife, who stepped into Murray's office shortly after the funeral and announced that nothing was going to interrupt the smooth flow of the Cotton Club's operation.

Some might have wondered why she threw herself into the conduct of the business so soon after her husband's death; the truth is that the Cotton Club was Weinger's show business brainchild from first to last, and Rusty looks at it and over it as a monument.

She never refers to it as The Cotton Club; she insists that Murray Weinger's Cotton Club is its right name.

The wise guys who only a few months ago were positive that the new Cotton Club didn't have a prayer are admitting now that every inch of it is a gold lined hot property. One of its happiest members is Clarence Robinson, who'd been one of the major cogs in the success of the original. He'd regretted from 1938 that so few great Negro entertainers who had written some of CC's most memorable hits—had not found another outlet which to do the dull tunesmiths of Tin Pan Alley several ones better by coming up with music and lyrics that were funny, tragic, romantic, and maturedly offbeat?

Other cabarets using the Cotton Club name did pop up in different places from time to time. But each imitation failed, for a fundamental reason: the show business skill which Clarence Robinson, Benny Davis, and a few others had infused into the original was missing. The original had successfully presented one act topping the one immediately preceding it with a carefully breathless pace. The imitators merely dished out speed and frenzy, seemingly for the sole sakes of speed and frenzy.

The answer was long coming. But last year the late Weinger, an ambitious young boniface who had seen his own clubs rise, fall, rise, and then fall again, resurrected the true Cotton Club after 18 famished years—this time in Miami Beach, Florida, where the popular, now-defunct Beachcomber had stood it flourished.

Although the revue that opened there and stayed for nearly six months to mammoth business has moved on to increasing fame in the country's strategic points, people who ought to know are still giving the word of mouth shout that The Cotton Club show—with voluptuous Sallie Blair, singer Lonnie Sartin, impressionist George Kirby, and the afore-noted Mr. Calloway—was the greatest single production Miami ever saw.

Las Vegas' Royal Nevada, which booked it next, made a fortune with it. It's still traveling intact around the most representative parts of the United States, on its way to The Palace Theatre in New York, where it will be the first out and out package show in the Palace's long history. Then it will return to Miami for its second winter season. The thousands upon thousands of patrons who have seen it both in and away from Florida insist that no night club show in memory—since Harlem's halcyon Cotton Club days—has in any way come close to comparing with its energy, animation, wit, sex appeal, and all-around theatrical know-how.

Briefly, the current Cotton Club revue tabs slightly under two hours, carries 48 in the cast including eight dancers and four show girls whose lovely faces and overall pulchritude are designed to make the most jaded of nitery habitués revived. It features momentarily redheaded Sallie Blair whose nine minute vocal medley of "Hold 'Em Joe" and "That Old Black Magic" automatically makes the word sex more exciting than but no less respectable than petit-point, offers Kirby who's hilariously funny and Sartin who's muscularly melodic, and amply gives Cab Calloway, who M.C.'s, talks, grins, struts, and sings the marvelous hi-de-hokum of St. James Infirmary, Minnie the Moocher, and Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen.

"I've been around for a little while," exclaims Cab Calloway, a jubilantly expressive star who looks exactly the way he did 20 years ago, "and I say this show beats anything anywhere for entertainment." Calloway ought to know about entertainment; he's been dishing it out for a great many years, always in the most palatable of ways, from his first appearance in "Connie's Hot Chocolates," to becoming a headliner in radio, records, and orchestra leading. *

SUNDAY 18 AUGUST, 1957

ON THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW



“

“Cab Calloway was his winning self in an opening production number, but did not register nearly as well as his closing number ‘Ain’t Necessarily So,’ which was done solo.”

—*Horo, Variety,*
August 21, 1957

Cab Calloway performing with The Ed Sullivan orchestra backstage (possibly: Chris Griffin, Bernie Privin, Jimmy Nottingham, tp; Roland DuPont, Morton Bullman, Joe Bennett, Frank Rehak, Cliff Heather, tb; Toots Mondello, Hymie Schertzer, Ed Zuhlke, sax; Frank Schlesinger, percussions; ?, p; Howard Smith, d) conducted by Ray Bloch (also arranger).

Cab Calloway was almost a regular on the “Ed Sullivan Show” on CBS. This 1957 appearance is indeed his sixth on this popular TV show, aired on Sunday, and which did a lot to break down race barriers.

Cab’s energy, moves, and singing are literally “eating” the little screen, in two different songs and kinds of performance: he’s so huge on the small screen!



WATCH CAB IN ACTION
ON THE ED SULLIVAN SHOW

"Blues in the Night"



"It Ain't Necessarily So."



SEPTEMBER 1957



Cab Calloway on piano.
Chorus girl Lenora Epae on the piano.
(photos for the forthcoming
Gone album)

SEPTEMBER 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

2 (4:05 pm)

Guest of radio show Don "Franklin's Frolics", WCKR, Miami, FL

3

Expected appearance in court for speeding ticket, along with road manager Chester Smith, Cranford? NJ

4-15 ca

Vacation, ?

16-23

Cotton Club Revue (only with Norma Miller and her dancers), plus the Jaye Brothers, backed by Moe Balsom Orchestra, Town Casino, Buffalo, NY

16

Cab Calloway quits Hallmark's "Green Pastures" NBC-TV production

28 (afternoon and evening)

Attends (among 750 guests) the wedding of Mary Elizabeth Alexander and Melvin F. Brown, Union African Methodist Episcopal Church (1 pm), Warwick Hotel, Philadelphia, PA

29 (1 pm)

Guest, along with Doretta Morrow, Fran Warren, Bill Hayes, backed by Percy Faith's Woolworth Orchestra, "The Best in Music"/Woolworth Hour, WCCO, New York, NY



EDEN ROC PRESENTS IN THE **CAFE POMPEII**
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SUPPER CLUB IN THE WORLD

LAST 2 NITES

CAB CALLOWAY
Comedy by **BOBBY SARGENT**
Star of the **COTTON CLUB REVUE**
Songs by **LOIS O'BRIEN**

OPENING THURSDAY
PRESENTING THE INTERNATIONALLY FAMOUS **QUINTETTO ALLEGRO**
Ambassadors of Melody & Humor
Extra Added Attraction **BOB CARROLL**
Singing Star of Roly Records
The Exciting **MANBO ACES**

49th St. & Collins
SUMMER POLICY
FULL COURSE DELUXE DINNER of unsurpassed quality **4.95**
NEVER A COVER no minimum for dinner guests

The Miami News, Sep 3, 1957

Rau-mance item, too. . . . Some Spot: Rau-commended for your entertainment is Cab Calloway, who is transforming the Eden Roc into a hunk of the Cotton Club this week. Love to know where this guy gets his vitamin pills. He must be pushing 60, easily, and jumps around the stage with more exuberance than we were able to manage when we were half his age!

The Miami News, Sep 3, 1957

CAB CALLOWAY hopes to play the role of "Sport-in' Life" in Goldwyn's screen version of "Porgy and Bess." Calloway has dieted off 23 pounds. Sammy Davis, Jr., also hopes to play the role, and has rehearsed it for six months. Nat "King" Cole wants five weeks rehearsal before making a screen test. If Harry Belafonte plays "Porgy," his voice would be dubbed by LaVern Hutchinson, who played "Porgy" in Russia and who sang Belafonte's songs in "Carmen Jones."

The Minneapolis Star, Sep 11, 1957

TOWN CASINO
OPENING TONIGHT
Monday, Sept. 16 thru 22

CAB CALLOWAY
The JAYE BROS.
Norma Miller & Her Dancers
Dels Duo Fran-Tone-Day Trio
LENNY PAIGE **ROSSANNE**
Singing Master of Informalities Queen of Aerobatics
MOE BALSOM and HIS ORCHESTRA

NO MINIMUM—NO COVER—EXCEPT WEEKENDS
SHOW TIMES: Saturday, 7:30 and 10:00 P. M.—1:15 A. M.
Nite, 8:00 and 11:00 P. M.—2:00 A. M.
MONDAY NITE IS LADIES' NITE—SPEND WHAT YOU LIKE
For Ladies: No Minimum—No Cover—No Entertainment Charge
RESERVATIONS: CALL CLEVELAND 7388

OPENING SEPT. 23
★ **MISS DOROTHY COLLINS**
WITH AN ALL STAR CAST

WE CATER TO BANQUETS and PARTIES—10 to 1000
Full Course Dinners From \$1.75

Buffalo Evening News, NY, Sep 16, 1957

Town Casino, Buffalo
Buffalo, Sept. 17.
Cab Calloway, Jaye Bros., Norma Miller & Her Dancers (8), Dels Duo, Fran-Tone-Day Trio, Rossanne, Moe Balsom Orch; entertainment charge 60c nights; \$3-\$1.50 minimum weekends.

Clubs may come and clubs may go but the Town Casino goes on forever. For more than a dozen years this bustling bistro has been offering the public of these parts all the top names in nitery talent until, because of its steady and substantial Canadian patronage, it has become something of an international institution. So far as Buffalo is concerned, it is practically the sole remaining spot where live talent can still be seen. As such, it staged a brilliant seasonal opening last week with Sammy Davis Jr. and follows up now with a striking show underscoring Cab Calloway. That's top bracket billing in the book of any nitery entrepreneur.

Working alone, Calloway uncovers again the uniquely effervescent qualities which have kept him in the spotlight for more than two decades. His habit in recent years of surrounding himself with new and young performers has led many to forget that he is a fine entertainer on his own. Here, groomed in impeccable white-suited tails and using a handmike, he delivers for maximum results a dozen highly diversified numbers—some smooth like "Right Time," "Black Magic" and "Taking a Chance on Love" and some scat such as "St. James Infirmary" and his trademarked "Minnie The Moocher." His sole costume change is for an encore in which (with Norma Miller) he whams out "Rock and Roll Romeo" in doublets and tights.

Jaye Bros. are in with their telling celeb impersonations, their

Martin & Lewis, Liberace and Durante bits being especially effective. They are a couple of very funny boys who, with more material, could well be of production calibre. Norma Miller & Her Dancers, out of the Cotton Club, offer some exotic dance routines which are frenetically right for this show. The Dels Duo on the trampoline and Rossanne help in the more conventional acrobatics department and the Fran-Tone-Day Trio are spotted for songs and comedy. Lenny Page, long a Casino perennial, bears up under the emcee chore with the assist of a hard-earned invaluable knowledge of the idiosyncracies of the spot's patrons.

Operators Harry Altman and Harry Wallens have bolstered the club's personnel this season. Jack Fink, late of the Latin Casino, Philadelphia, is manager; Ben Adelman, maitre; and Jack McMullen heads the waiter cadre.

On the strength of this show, as well as its past performances and coming bookings, the T.C. continues to represent the biggest value in these parts for the public's shrinking entertainment dollar.
Burton.

Variety, Sep 29, 1957

TV DRAMA

CAB'S LOST ROLES IN "PORGY AND BESS" AND "GREEN PASTURES" ON TV



Among the numerous disappointments Cab Calloway endured in 1957, at least two were directly related to the medium he had been trying to conquer for years: television.

Despite his legendary status as a performer and his proven theatrical credentials, the year would bring a series of frustrating near-misses that highlighted the complex racial dynamics and business politics of the emerging television industry. 1957 ended as a year of unfulfilled promise in what should have been a natural transition to the small screen.

THE "PORGY & BESS-GATE" ON TV AND IN MOVIE THEATERS

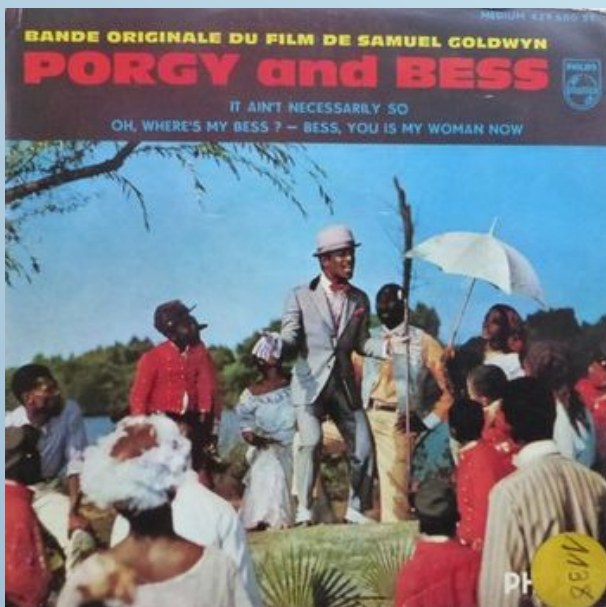
The adaptation of Gershwin's opera was in development by several producers, both for television and cinema. Cab's relentless performances during the 1952-1954 revival produced by Breen and Davis had earned him considerable respect from classical music reviewers, even though some condescension was hidden in many articles.

When the syndicated press published the headline "Porgy and Bess set for TV" on January 5, 1957, accompanied by a picture of Cab, everybody believed that the king of hide-ho would once again don his straw hat and carnation to play the role of Sportin' Life—a character whose songs were modeled after Cab's.

NBC was scheduled to air the show over two successive nights (60 and 90 minutes respectively)—a first for any channel! Robert Breen, the producer Cab had previously worked with, had secured an arrangement with the Gershwin estate for \$112,000 in television rights alone, with final costs expected to exceed \$750,000.

The production would include Cab and most of the cast from the previous touring production, including William Warfield and Leontyne Price.

"It will be the first time that an all-Negro show [will] be presented over a nationwide hookup," the newspaper reported.



Ultimately, the television production never materialized. Otto Preminger's adaptation for MGM (with \$650,000 paid by Samuel Goldwyn to the estate) in color would be the only released project—without Cab, though, who had battled throughout 1957 to secure the role of Sportin' Life. He reportedly dieted off 23 pounds in his efforts to land the part. Sammy Davis Jr. ultimately sang the role on screen but, due to contractual obligations, was dubbed by Cab for the soundtrack album!

By coincidence, at least two other members of the Cotton Club revue also pursued roles in the "Porgy and Bess" production: Sallie Blair (who, at this time, was having an affair with Sammy Davis Jr.—[see page 67](#)) and Jimmy Randolph, later in 1958.

Otto Preminger's film was released in 1959 without Cab. Biographer Alyn Shipton explains in his 2010 book that this may not have been entirely unfortunate for him: "Meanwhile, the opposing critical positions adopted over the stage show by Brooks Atkinson and Langston Hughes mushroomed into a heated and long-running debate among the intelligentsia about the forthcoming movie, its content, and the roles of its participants. Cab was immune to this controversy, having relinquished his interest, but soon after its release the picture was withdrawn from further public exhibition at the request of the Gershwin estate. It has seldom been seen since."

A French EP release of "Porgy and Bess," showing Sammy Davis, Jr on the cover, while it's Cab Calloway people hear singing (shot while recording it in the studio, Ebony, 1958).



"CABIN IN THE SKY": THE BONUS FIASCO

Between "Porgy" and "Green Pastures," a touring production of "Cabin in the Sky" for Great Britain and Europe, scheduled for fall 1957, was also under consideration. Newspapers announced in May that Cab would receive the leading role (he had been cast for the 1942 movie version but withdrew in favor of Louis Armstrong, who played the role of Hades). Once again, this production never materialized, and the Cotton Club Revue package proceeded into its second season instead.

"GREEN PASTURES" NOT SO GREEN...

When the NBC press release dated August 28, 1957, titled "Marc Connelly Will Adapt His Great Hit, 'The Green Pastures,' For Season's Colorcast Premiere Of 'Hallmark Hall of Fame,'" the text ensues with "an all-Negro cast of 60, headed by William Warfield as De Lawd, Eddie 'Rochester' Anderson as Noah and Cab Calloway as the King of Babylon." The premiere was scheduled for Thursday, October 17, at 9:30-11 pm. The original successful play, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1930, ran for 640 performances and enjoyed revivals in 1935 and 1951, including a film adaptation in 1936. Television was logically the next medium to be targeted.

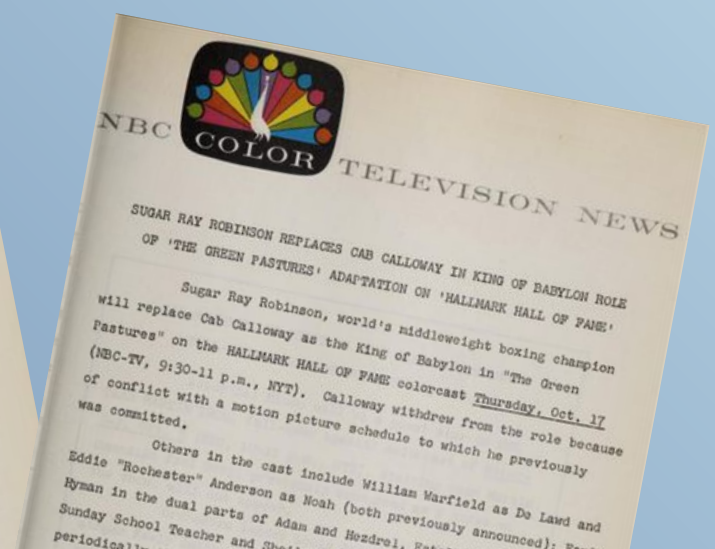
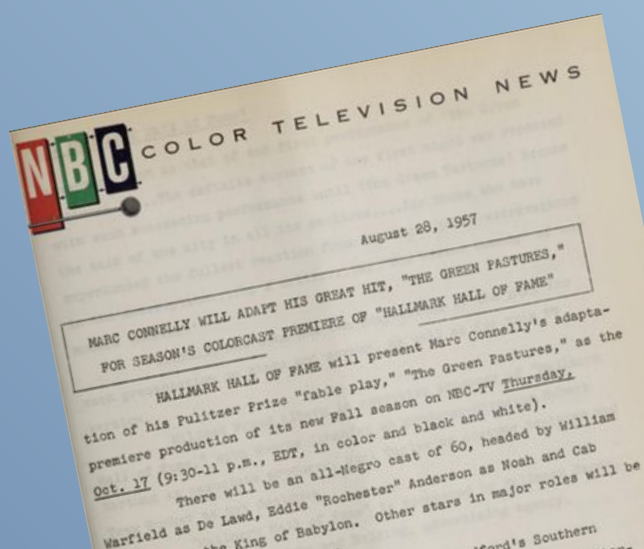
But things didn't unfold the way the Bible intended! Less than 10 days later, the Daily News reported that middleweight boxer Sugar Ray Robinson would portray the King of Babylon, replacing the king of Hi-De-Ho (trumpeter and actor Bill Dillard ultimately did it). In its September 26, 1957 edition, TV Guide stated: "Cab Calloway quits Hallmark's 'Green Pastures' production when he learned they had been keeping him on the string while the role was being offered to four others. Cab remembered a previous movie commitment." This was indeed his contract for "St. Louis Blues," the biopic of W.C. Handy, though it was actually shot later at the Paramount lot in Hollywood in October. It's worth noting that the young Michelle Clarke played a little girl and an angel perched on a cloud in "Green Pastures."

Remember that the month before the first broadcast of this all-Black TV show, the TV had shown federal troops dispatched in Little Rock, AK...



The King of Hi-De-Ho and the King of Fighters had both feelings about their King of Babylone role...

Not everyone was aware of the change in the cast for "The Green Pastures." (The Dispatch, Oct 17, 1957)



FROM MONTREAL TO FLORIDA

THE SAVAR DANCERS



The Savar dancers is a group of 5 female American dancers: Mary LANE, Bobbie Jean DAY, Roxy YOUNG, Tina (?), and Joan MYERS BROWN (3rd from the left). The latter is the founder and became a very famous dancer and choreographer in Philadelphia.

The group was created in Montreal at the Café Montmartre when its owner, Bill Savar, asked Joan Myers to be the dancer of the club with 3 local girls. They remained in Montreal, going on tour and coming back home for 30 months or so. Then Joan Myers wanted to go back to the USA.

That's when Cab Calloway (who noticed them while in Canada) hired the Savar Dancers for the 1957 Cotton Club Revue in Miami. They stayed with Cab for the first season. Then, the group broke up because most of the girls wanted to go back to Canada. Joan Myers wanted to stay, so she auditioned for the 1958 edition of the show. She was booked alone, as a dancer, without a proper act.

OCTOBER 1957



Nat King Cole, Eartha Kitt and Cab Calloway, three stars of St. Louis Blues, take a stroll on the Paramount lot. But they couldn't get away from the script (October 1957)

OCTOBER 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

4 (evening)

Attends with Nuffie and tennis player Althea Gibson the tennis award banquet of the Arlington Racquet Club, at Dr. Walter and Elois Davis, Arlington, CA

7

Beginning of shooting of "St. Louis Blues", Paramount studios, Hollywood, CA

10

Cab appears in court for gambling debts (dice tables) and is condemned to pay \$315 to Z. Louie, operator of the Louisiana Club, Las Vegas, NE

22 (7:30-8:00 pm)

Featured guest of *The Nat King Cole Show* (backed by Nelson Riddle's orchestra, choreography by Marie Bryant), NBC Studio #1, 3200 Olive Avenue, Burbank, CA

31

Guest of Music Makers of 1958, along with The Hi-Lites and the dance team of Judy Shaw and Bob Van Norman, CBC, Montreal?, QC, CANADA





California Eagle, Los Angeles, CA, Oct 10, 1957

'St. Louis Blues' Cast Starts Pix Rehearsal

By HARRY LEVETTE

HOLLYWOOD — (ANP) — Back from Las Vegas, Nev., where several members of the company had been rehearsing with Nat "King" Cole who was filling an engagement there, "St. Louis Blues," enacting the life of Mr. Handy; Juano Hernandez on the Paramount lot last week.

Notables of the entertainment world are cast in this great musical, which is predicted to be not only a great tribute to the great composer, but one of the greatest box-office attractions of the year.

Nat "King" Cole enacts the role of Mr. Handy; Juano Hernandez, flown here from his home in

Puerto Rico for the part, enacts "Rev. Charles Handy" his father; Eartha Kitt plays Gogo Germaine, Mahalia Jackson plays "Bessie Mae," Cab Calloway enacts the flashy "Blade," Pearl Bailey plays herself and Ella Fitzgerald is also billed under her own name.

Ruby Dee, who made her debut in Hollywood, on the Fox lot in "No Way Out," several years ago, plays "Elizabeth," Handy's first sweetheart. Ruby is an excellent actress and well fitted for the role both in appearance and ability.

Other actors for bit roles and as extras will be drafted from the local colony.

Daily Defender, Chicago, IL, Oct 9, 1957

Cab Calloway Told to Pay Dice Debt

LAS VEGAS, Nev., Oct. 10 (INS)—Singer Cab Calloway has failed to convince a Las Vegas judge that gambling debts are not legal.

Judge Art Olsen yesterday ordered Calloway to pay \$315 to Z. Louie, operator of the Louisiana Club. Calloway admitted that he lost the money at the dice tables but argued that gambling debts are not legal.

Calloway said he was fighting the case for the "principle" and that his attorneys fees would probably exceed the debt.

Stockton Daily Evening Record, CA, Oct 10, 1957

7:00
NAT "KING" COLE SHOW
WITH CAB CALLOWAY
AND A SPECIAL SURPRISE WESTERN STAR
Sponsored by Gallo Wine

6:00
CITY DETECTIVE (ROD CAMERON) is slated out to call a (three) lane band.

9:00
POLLY KERGEN welcomes DON AMICHE for a medley of living Berlin tunes.

9:30
GIZELLE MacKENZIE joins guest EDDIE FISHER for a session of music, dance and comedy.

11:00
STAR THEATER
M-G-M's ONE NEW YORK NIGHT
FRANCHOT TONE UNA MERKLE CONRAD NAGLE

KMJ-TV CHANNEL 24

The Fresno Bee, CA, November 2, 1957

CAB'S FIRST ACTING ROLE

“ST. LOUIS BLUES”



“

“ST. LOUIS BLUES
DOESN’T BEGIN
TO DO JUSTICE
TO THE MAN’S LIFE
OR HIS MUSIC...
A RIDICULOUS
WASTE OF TALENT.”
—*Oakland Tribune*

St. Louis Blues (1958) is a movie production that was filled with promise, a film biography of W.C. Handy covering the obstacles and successes of a great American, a musical with a magnificent canon of songs, and the on-screen assembly of many of the most talented mid-century African-American performers.

But it’s a missed opportunity – simply not a memorable film, it’s slow-moving and clichéd, the true charms of its stars mostly not visible; a portfolio of assets with no value. How could it go so wrong?

THE STARS

From the beginning, the film was planned around **Nat 'King' Cole** in the central role. This film production presented the timely and logical opportunity for Cole to add 'movie star' to his already considerable accomplishments as a musician, singer, and TV star -- provided he could carry an entire picture as the main protagonist. He had completed supporting roles in *China Gate* with Gene Barry and Angie Dickinson and *Istanbul* with Errol Flynn (both 1957), and performed as himself in several other films. But in *St. Louis Blues* his performance would end up studied and wooden. Cole's undeniable charisma is nowhere to be seen in this film; he simply did not have the dramatic momentum to hold the story together.

Other stars included:

- **Eartha Kitt**, then at the height of her powers, also making a move to become a movie star. In the film, she portrays Gogo Germaine, honky-tonk singer and femme fatale with a heart of gold.
- **Pearl Bailey**, as Will's Aunt Hagar, who helped raise the young Handy, doesn't actually sing a full number of her own in the film.



- **Mahalia Jackson**, the immortal gospel singer, played the part of Bessie Mae, a member of Reverend Handy's church choir, leading a hymn written by Handy, "Hush the Wind." Later, Jackson beautifully sings two fine Handy hymns without embellishment.
- **Ella Fitzgerald** plays herself performing in a nightclub, singing Handy's "Beale Street Blues" in a lilting and effective manner in her one brief scene.





CAB CALLOWAY, THE VILLAIN OF THE MOVIE

Cab Calloway, who plays Blade, a Beale Street saloon-keeper, the villain of the story. He walks around his nightclub, The Big Rooster, in a tailored suit with a carnation in his buttonhole, eavesdropping on his employees, being rude to his customers, and hatching a nefarious scheme to steal Handy's music. Normally, you'd expect such a character to be molesting the slinky Eartha Kitt all the time, but this is 1957, so there's barely a hint of that.

Unlike Pearl, Cab stays true to the nasty character that he's playing and doesn't let his exuberant stage presence shine through. And unfortunately, Cab doesn't sing a note in the movie. "I don't know if the world is ready for a quiet Cab" he said about the part before the film was released. "Cab's role," producer Robert Smith explained in *Down Beat*, "is strictly character."

Cab Calloway and W.C. Handy were on same bill in various benefit productions as early as 1934 and they appeared together in the 5th edition of the Cotton Club Parade in 1938 and at a 65th birthday tribute to Handy at Carnegie Hall the same year.



"St. Louis BLues" by Cab Calloway



"St. Louis Blues" is an iconic and immensely popular song by W.C. Handy first published in 1914. By 1957, Handy's royalties for the song were still a remarkable \$50,000 annually. In an October 1957 interview, Cab Calloway said his two favorite songs were "St. Louis Blues" and "Stardust."

At Cab's first studio session as a bandleader in 1930, he recorded "St. Louis Blues" in an original hot jazz arrangement, the vocal opening with Cab holding a single note on the word "blues" for a full 10 bars.



“

EARTHA (as Germaine)
“LET ME IN ON IT,
MAYBE
‘I CAN SMILE TOO’

CAB (as Blade)
“FORTUNE TELLER
TOLD ME
I WAS GONNA
MAKE A LOT OF MONEY!”



BEHIND THE SCENES

In the fall of 1957, Little Rock High School was being integrated, the NAACP and the National Guard were involved, President Eisenhower and Governor Faubus were at odds, and the United States was at a crossroads in race relations. Black celebrities were speaking out and showing support more than ever. A tense time to be sure, but Hollywood was not ready to acknowledge the movement.

Hollywood was plugging other all Black cast musicals. *Carmen Jones* (1954) at Fox Studios, and the upcoming *Porgy and Bess* (1959) produced by Samuel Goldwyn for Columbia, were big budget color productions, both directed by Otto Preminger. Expectations were high for St. Louis Blues as well, but only second tier filmmakers were assigned to work on the film, and none of them were African American.

While the United States struggles with violence and racism, Paramount Studios' photographs tend to prove that everybody can work together.

1 - With Gary Cooper

2 & 3: with Cary Grant

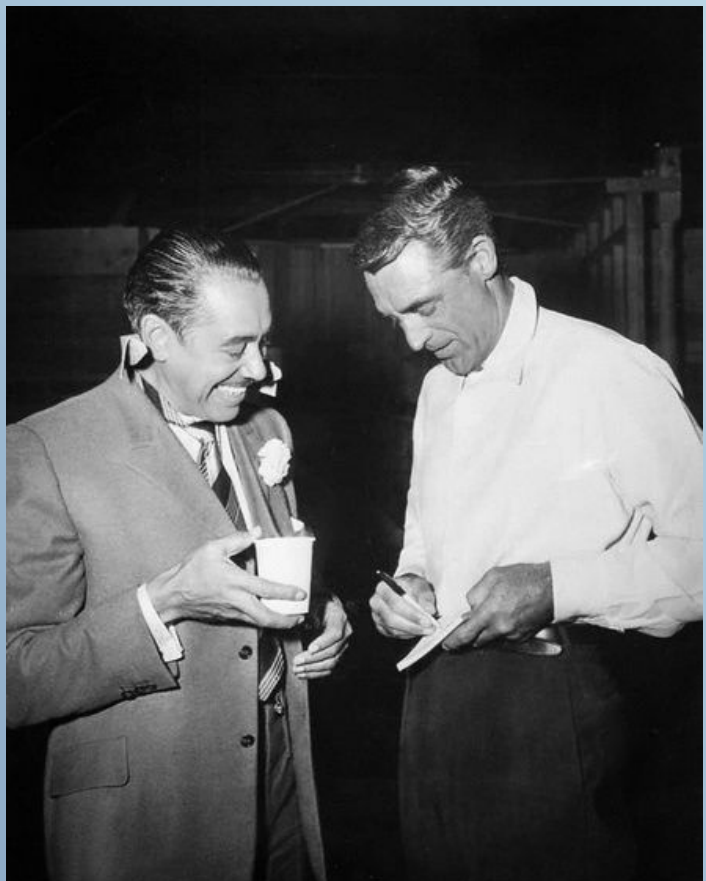


ON THE PARAMOUNT LOT AND IN NBC STUDIOS

Rehearsals prior to shooting took place in Las Vegas, where Cole was appearing at the Sands Hotel and Eartha Kitt at the El Rancho. Filming started on October 7th and continued for three weeks through November 1st, 1957, at Paramount Studios in Los Angeles.

The movie was filmed almost entirely on the Paramount back lot. Only the scenes taking place at The Big Rooster club were filmed on location at an actual Los Angeles club, the Royal Room, a traditional jazz venue at 6700 Hollywood Boulevard; the club was gutted in a fire just a month after the film wrapped.

Since *The Nat King Cole Show* was filmed in Los Angeles, Cole brought on several of the film's cast members as weekly guests for the TV show: Eartha Kitt (Oct 8), Cab Calloway (Oct 22, see following pages), musicians Barney Bigard, Teddy Buckner and George Washington, along with Billy Preston (Nov 5), Mahalia Jackson (Nov 12), Ella Fitzgerald (Nov 19). Note that Pearl Bailey had been a guest the previous season.



THE REVIEWS

On March 28, 1958, W.C. Handy died, just a few days before the movie premiered. A *Charlotte Observer* editorial tribute to Handy lamented the loss of the blues altogether, replaced by “the slick, modern professional” singers embodied by Fats Domino and Nat ‘King’ Cole, leaving only “the pale commercial facsimile of Tin Pan Alley.” Yes, the very same Nat King Cole, the star of our film, was branded as an example of the loss of the blues!

In the *Oakland Tribune*, Theresa Loeb Cone wrote, “St. Louis Blues doesn’t begin to do justice to the man’s life or his music” and “A ridiculous waste of talent.”

Globe and Mail reviewer Ronald Johnson wrote that the production, “given the best talent and story possibilities in the world, comes up with a dud.” (...) “Cab Calloway pops in for a few moments to give an excellent portrayal of a caustic nightclub owner.... Biggest lack in the picture is any true sense of atmosphere.”

Ralph Matthews, writing in *The Afro-American*, said Hollywood was too scared to show any actual intimacy between Black actors or characters. Although the main protagonist has two long relationships, one with the good girl back home (Ruby Dee) and one with the urban vixen (Eartha Kitt), “there was no kissing, no hugging, no fond embraces to create the illusion that anybody was that way about anybody else... the alleged lovers all behaved like perfect strangers.” (Actually, Cole and Dee hugged briefly once in the picture, and in one scene Eartha ran her fingernails along Cole’s shoulder.)

In an example of ducking any racial issues in the film, the script has Cab Calloway as Blade stealing Handy’s first composition. In reality, of course, it was white publishers who took advantage of the composer early in his career.

EPILOGUE

St. Louis Blues was a flop at the box office. I hate to see that evening sun go down.

Cab Calloway’s acting career survived the film. He soon went on to an excellent supporting dramatic role in *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965) with Steve McQueen, and some other non-singing guest appearances in the TV shows *Harry O’* with David Janssen and *Madigan* with Richard Widmark. Nat King Cole made no further dramatic film appearances.



Our full-length article
about “St Louis Blues”
is available at:
WWW.THEHIDEHOBLOG.COM





TWO KINGS ON TV

“THE NAT KING COLE SHOW”



“

“LET ME SING HI-DE-HO
WHEN I’M ON TV,
I’D RATHER HAVE
A CAMERA
THAN A GUN
SHOOTING AT ME”

—CAB CALLOWAY,
“Don’t Fence Me In”

What happens when the King of Hi-de-ho is invited by Nat ‘King’ Cole onto his own TV show? Nine minutes of zest, swing, and fun between two jazz performers and two friends! Shot on Tuesday, October 22, 1957, while both Cab and Nat were working in Hollywood studios for the movie *St. Louis Blues*.

The Nat King Cole Show premiered in fall 1956 on NBC. “With the staggering popularity of his recordings [more than 45 million records sold!], NBC finally decided to give him a real shot at his own weekly program,” writes his biographer Will Friedwald, “Straighten Up and Fly Right.” He adds, “From the beginning, it was a gamble; a few black singers and entertainers, like Hazel Scott and Billy Daniels, had tentatively tried smaller-scale shows, but *The Nat King Cole Show* was the major leagues.”

Like most jazz historians, Friedwald was unaware of Cab Calloway's own aborted television show, which was supposed to air in May 1949 on the same channel. Sponsored by Procter & Gamble and presented from their Fireside Theatre live from New York. "On this new TV show, Cab will select and bring to the public new and outstanding sepia talent. The show's format will be variety and will include a top name as guest," reported the *California Eagle* on April 28, 1949. But at the last minute, Procter & Gamble canceled without explanation. A fuming Billy Rowe continued, "Guess they just didn't want to gamble with democracy since so many bigots seem to be taking a hand in raising the TV baby..." (*The Pittsburgh Courier*, May 7, 1949). A few weeks later, the *Daily News* of July 14, 1949, reported that Cab was offered "an all-Negro variety show to be telecast by NBC next fall..." Guess what? It never happened.

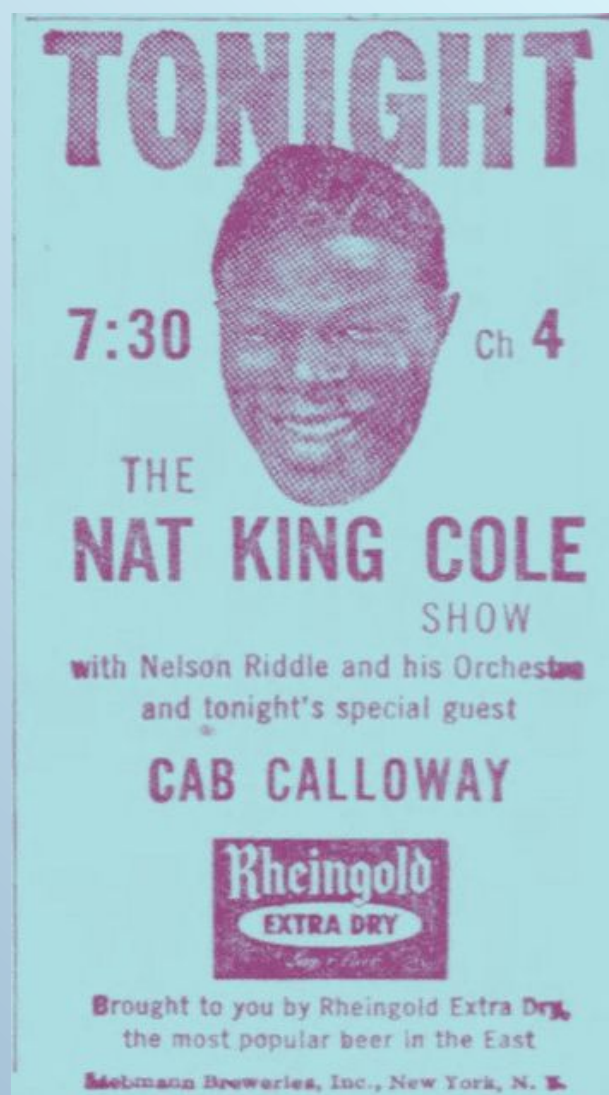
OCTOBER 22, 1957: THE PERFORMANCE

This was the show's third season. During these 30-minute weekly performances, Nat King Cole typically hosted popular guests, both Black and white, featuring the usual "interplay between host and visitors: chatter, jokes, and duets, both comic and serious" (Friedwald).

After Hugh O'Brien, an actor known for westerns, joins Nat King Cole to sing "Don't Move," the host performs "Personal Possession" with the Randy Van Horn Singers.



NBC press picture for the show. The camera, heralded by the channel's logo, is clearly visible.



Advertisement featuring Nat King Cole's next guest. Note that the sponsor for that episode was Rheingold beer, an announcer who always called African American personalities to promote its products. (*Daily News*, New York, NY, Oct 22, 1957)

At 11 minutes and 40 seconds, in a typical saloon set, the segment with Cab Calloway begins. Dressed as a cowboy and out of breath, Cab explains he was trying out for a new television program but was rejected because he didn't want to "sing western." Nat follows with a satire of "Home on the Range," lamenting how audience tastes have changed and "unless you're a cowboy, you're dead."

Beyond the fact that the other guest, Hugh O'Brien, was one of TV's biggest western stars, this was probably also a direct jab at two popular western shows airing alternately on ABC in the same time slot. Those competitors consistently achieved high ratings, while NBC's never gained strength.

THE MUSICAL NUMBERS

"Pull on the shades, barricade the door, now bring on the lights, you're on," says Nat. Cab then performs "It Ain't Necessarily So" from *Porgy and Bess* with his usual choreography and scatting. He appears to be singing to playback, struggling with lip-sync, especially during the scat sections (or was this an audio retake?).

Convinced he'll need his own channel, Cab Calloway and Nat King Cole perform together a spoof version rewritten by Shirley Henry of "Don't Fence Me In." One hilarious verse declares: "I'd rather do hi-de-ho till I lose my senses. It may not be new, but it pays the expenses."

Cab's final performance is "the kind of song I wanna do": "The Calloway Boogie," this time obviously performed live. Cab had created the song ten years earlier. All the show's new arrangements were by Nelson Riddle and were exquisite, brilliant, and perfectly matched Cab's singing and screen presence. Though not a television star, Cab Calloway was experienced with television, having made his first small-screen appearance in January 1947. He was recognized as a "natural for television." Yet despite numerous TV appearances, Cab wasn't as comfortable with cameras as Nat. Sometimes Cab struggled with his lines and glanced at the cue cards. But he displayed wonderful energy and chemistry with Nat King Cole on screen. The latter was seasoned at this—October 22, 1957 marked his 50th episode! Still, it's a treat for any Cab Calloway fan.





THE SHOW'S FATE

We all know the story: despite its musical excellence, *The Nat King Cole Show* faced insurmountable racial barriers with 1950s television audiences. National sponsors refused to back the program, fearing backlash from white Southern customers who opposed seeing a Black performer in a non-subservient role on television.

Though the show represented a pioneering effort in racial inclusion and artistic achievement, factors beyond anyone's control—including the star, director, and even NBC—prevented it from becoming profitable. After 64 episodes over 13 months, it was cancelled. As Nat King Cole bitterly observed: "Madison Avenue is afraid of the Dark."

It'll be a royal occasion, musically speaking, when the two kings meet - Nat 'King' Cole and his guest Cab Calloway, King of Hi-De-Ho, on NBC-TV's "NAT 'KING' COLE SHOW" of Tuesday, Oct. 22 (NBC-TV, 7:30 p.m. PST; 6:30 p.m. CST).

**WATCH
"THE NAT KING COLE SHOW"
EPISODE
WITH
CAB CALLOWAY**



**SCAN OR
CLICK HERE** 

NOVEMBER 1957



Is that the fact that Cab doesn't sing in St Louis Blues that makes him look that angry? He was happy to play the villain the movie....

NOVEMBER 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

17

Tribute to WC Handy (sings *St. James Infirmary* and *Minnie the Moocher*, backed by Don Redman conducting the orchestra), emceed by Paul Whiteman, Waldorf-Astoria, New York, NY

20 (8pm EST)

Cab appears with Lael Calloway along with Lonnie Sattin, on Patty Page's "The Big Record" (S1, Ep 10), CBS-TV, New York, NY

22-28

Stage Coach Inn, Hackensack, NJ

25

Provides "entertainment" (backed by Al Rickey's band), "Pioneer of the Year" evening, Waldorf Astoria, New York, NY

29

Attends the NAACP Freedom Fund dinner, along with 1,300 guests, including Governor Averell Harrison, Steve Allen, Jackie Robinson, in honor of Duke Ellington and baseball executive Branch Rickey Sr., The Roosevelt Hotel, New York, NY

31-December 1

Among the many stars participating in Jerry Lewis' Telethon, Channel 5-TV, The Roosevelt Hotel, New York, NY

No date

Recording session for "Cotton Club Revue" album, Gone Records, New York, NY



*Are you sure you're talking about
THE Cab Calloway?
Daily Cosmos Monitor, St. Charles
MO, Nov 22, 1957*

Opening Friday

CAB CALLOWAY

plus All Star Show

Now is the Time to Arrange for your Xmas Party. You will be amazed at our LOW PRICES. Parties from 10 to 1000. Reserve now for NEW YEARS EVE.

Now accepting all party reservations. Full course dinner incl. all tips & taxes. Round trip trans. from N.Y. for parties of 40 or over no extra cost.

\$5.75 (40 or more persons)

The NEW Stage Coach Inn

U.S. Route 46, S. HACKENSACK, N.J. 5 mi. from George Wash. Bridge.

FREE PARKING • Member Diners' Club • Hubbard 9-4040

The Record, Hackensack, NJ, Nov 22, 1957

Dayton Daily News,
OH, Nov 3, 1957

Cab Calloway Rates Top Tunes

HOLLYWOOD, Nov. 2—(AP)—Cab Calloway, the old master of hi de ho, calls "St. Louis Blues" and "Stardust" the greatest modern tunes of the century.

He argues that his performance in the movie version of composer W. C. Handy's life has nothing to do with his rating of the "Blues."

"This is an opinion I've held for many years," says Cab. He plays a heavy in the movie, the fellow who talks Handy out of the famous composition for peanuts. He doesn't sing.

"I don't know if the world is ready for a quiet Cab Calloway," he laments.

7:00 The Big Record Starring Patti Page as hostess. Guests Jack Carter, comedian; the Hi Lo's; vocal group; Eydie Gorme, vocalist; Cab Calloway, singer-bandleader; and Lonnie Satin, singer.



Corpus Christi Caller Times, TX, Nov 20, 1957

World Ready For Quiet Cab?

HOLLYWOOD (AP) — Cab Calloway, the old master of hi de ho, calls "St. Louis Blues" and "Stardust" the greatest modern tunes of the century.

He argues that his performance in the movie version of composer W. C. Handy's life has nothing to do with his rating of the "Blues."

"This is an opinion I've held for many years," says Cab. He plays a heavy in the movie, the fellow who talks Handy out of the famous composition for peanuts. He doesn't sing.

"I don't know if the world is ready for a quiet Cab Calloway," he laments.

The Republican, Springfield, MA, Nov, 20, 1957

Lincoln Journal Star, NE, Nov 3, 1957

TONIGHT TOP RATED LIVE SHOWS

ON CHANNEL 40

9:30

"I'VE GOT A SECRET"

THE BIG RECORD STARRING PATTI PAGE

CAB CALLOWAY guest star

8 P.M.

Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins, Eddie Heywood, Conrad Janis, Marion McPartland, Errol Garner, Buddy Rich, Bobby Hackett, Billy Williams and others . . . all night stay tuned to 8

Daily News, New York, NY, Nov 30, 1957

DON'T MISS Channel 5 TONIGHT STARTING 10 p.m.



JERRY LEWIS AND 100 TOP STARS

in a spectacular 19-hour Thanksgiving Party, featuring:

Steve Allen ★ Fran Allison ★ Polly Bergen ★ Milton Berle ★ Pat Boone
Cab Calloway ★ Jill Corey ★ George DeWitt ★ Dizzy Gillespie
Dody Goodman ★ June Haver ★ Sammy Kaye ★ Teddi King ★ Robert Q. Lewis ★ Ted Lewis ★ Guy Lombardo ★ Hal March ★ Ricardo Montalban ★ Arthur and Kathryn Murray ★ Margaret O'Brien
Martha Raye ★ Thelma Ritter ★ Peter Ustinov ★ Rudy Vallee ★ Sarah Vaughn ★ Mike Wallace ★ Paul Winchell ★ Peggy Wood and others

JAZZ FESTIVAL

8 p.m. to 2 a.m. Sunday

31 TOP SOLOISTS and BANDS including:

Count Basie, Coleman Hawkins, Eddie Heywood, Conrad Janis, Marion McPartland, Errol Garner, Buddy Rich, Bobby Hackett, Billy Williams and others . . . all night stay tuned to 8

OPEN BOWL-ATHON

All day Sunday—Rico Lanes Bowling Alley, Mountbarnside, N.J.

COME BOWL WITH THE CHAMPS:

Jim Brown | Don Carter
Lou Campi | Marion Ladewig

Lt. Rip Masters (of the Roo-Tee-Tee show)
Ann Noga and surprise stars, too!

JUNIOR JAMBOREE

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday

ALL LIVE from Roosevelt Field Shopping Center, Flight Mall

featuring: TOP YOUNG STARS AND FAVORITES

including: Jerry Marshall, Captain Video, James Garner (of the "Maverick" show)

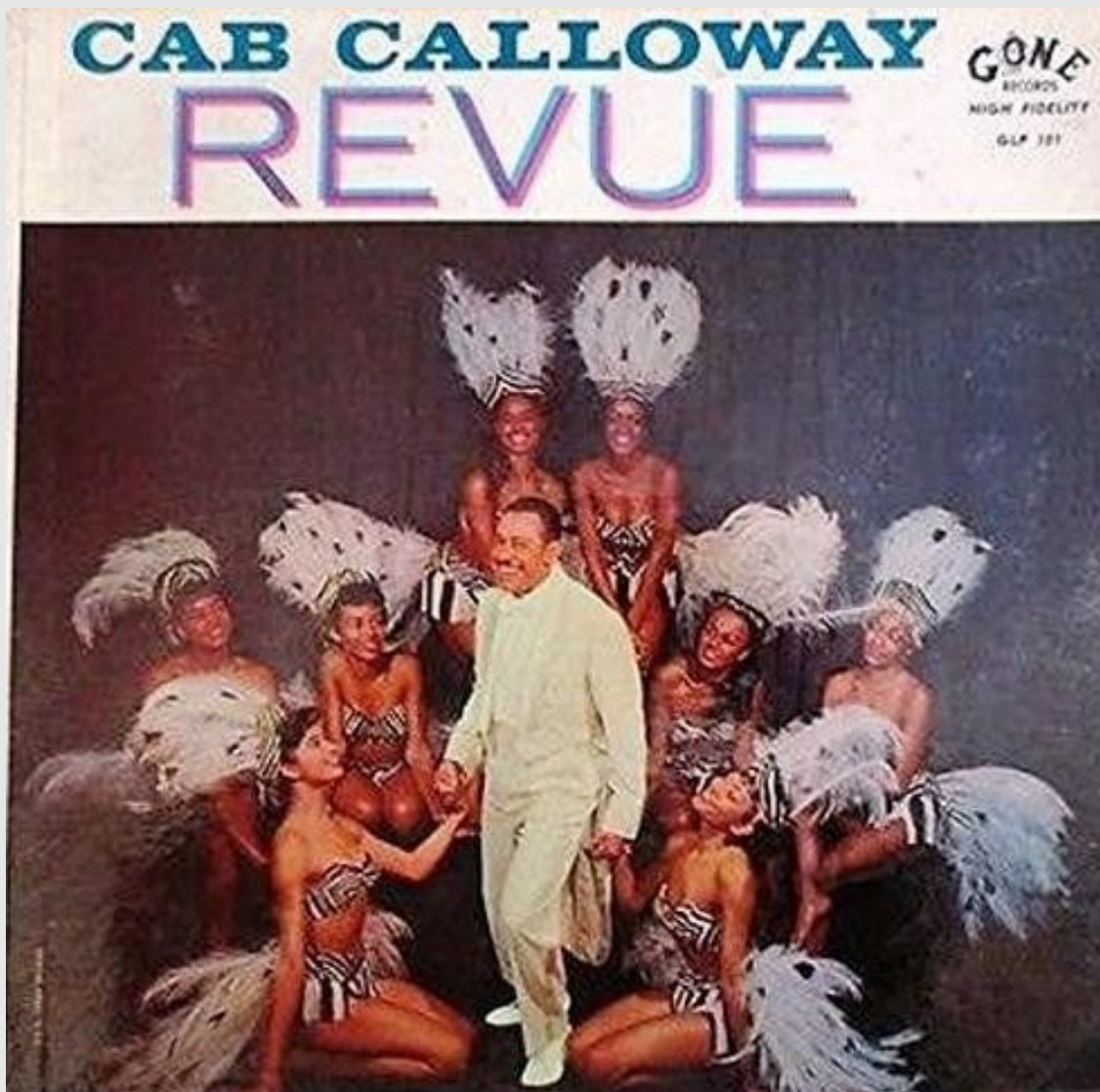
Free souvenirs . . . Free Carvel Ice Cream come yourself, in person, or watch on Ch. 5

SEE the stars match wits on your favorite quiz shows: "Dollar A Second," "\$64,000 Question," "Twenty-One!" SEE Jerry take on Mike Wallace . . . and compete on the Ted Mack Amateur Hour. WATCH Jerry and his friends turn TV upside down!!!

Produced by Ernest D. Gluckman

JOIN THE STARS WHO GIVE THEIR TIME TO BUILD THE INSTITUTE FOR MUSCLE DISEASE! Please Give Generously.

A TIME CAPSULE
RELEASED AT THE WRONG TIME
THE GONE ALBUM



Released in March 1958 to support the Cotton Club Revue, which was then touring in Miami and the USA, this LP is Cab Calloway's very first album – in the modern sense. Despite genuine qualities, this record went straight into the dustbin of discographers and jazz critics. It seems nevertheless to warrant some interest since, besides its two releases at the time, an unofficial vinyl emerged 40 years ago and an official release even popped up on CD in August 2014.

Cotton Club Revue of 1958 is actually the very first LP issued by the label GONE (LP101). GONE had been created by one of those amazing producers of the '50s, George Goldner (1918-1970), but will have only a short life.

In its edition of 25 November 1957, the trade magazine Billboard reports that Cab recorded his first session for his upcoming album. Announced in late January in the press as an event, the album would be finally released in March 1958.



George Goldner (1918-1970)

12 TRACKS FEATURING CAB CALLOWAY - BUT NOT ALONE

Here for the first time is the exact track listing with interpreters (no discography, no editing, even the latest research does not give this information):

A1: *Born To Be Happy* (voc.: Cab Calloway, backing voc.: Malcolm Dodds & The Tunedrops)

A2: *Tzotskele (My Darling)* (voc.: Cab Calloway, backing voc.: Malcolm Dodds & The Tunedrops)

A3: *Sinful* (voc.: Mauri Leighton, backing voc.: Malcolm Dodds & The Tunedrops)

A4: *Beginnin' Of Sinner* (voc.: Cab Calloway, backing voc.: Malcolm Dodds & The Tunedrops)

A5: *Sweeter Than Sweet* (voc.: Cab Calloway and Mauri Leighton, backing voc.: Malcolm Dodds & The Tunedrops)

A6: *Never Had It So Good* (voc.: Malcolm Dodds & The Tunedrops)

B1: *Minnie The Moocher* (voc.: Cab Calloway, backing voc.: Malcolm Dodds & The Tunedrops)

B2: *Copper Colored Gal* (voc.: Cab Calloway)

B3: *I've Got The World On A String* (voc.: Cab Calloway)

B4: *She's Tall, She's Tan, She's Terrific* (voc.: Cab Calloway)

B5: *Don't Worry 'Bout Me* (voc.: Mauri Leighton)

B6: *St. James Infirmary* (voc.: Cab Calloway)

Each side of the album corresponds to a specific musical universe: side A (the first 6 titles) are taken from the revue and are original compositions by Benny DAVIS and Clay BOLAND (see article).

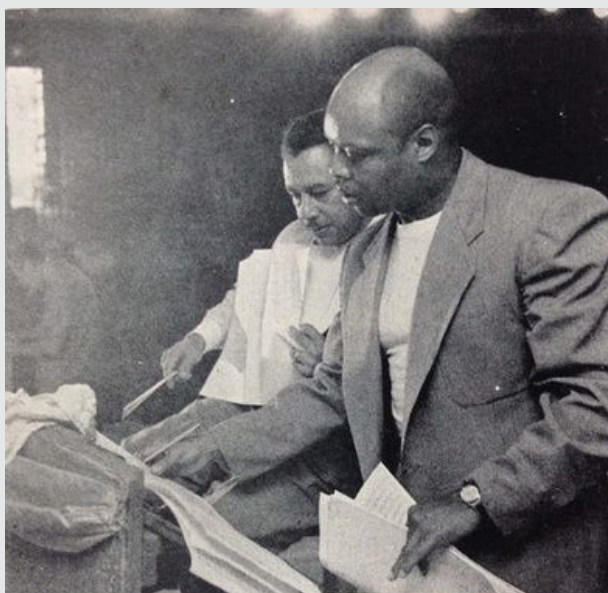
Meanwhile, side B contains the "traditional" repertoire of Cab Calloway (although *Don't Worry 'Bout Me* was sung by Cab at the 1939 World's Fair Cotton Club Revue - see our article).

What is surprising is that, besides being a Cab Calloway album, it's also a disc where his stage partners appear on both sides. Unfortunately for Malcolm DODDS & The TUNEDROPS, like Mauri LEIGHTON, their names are not listed on the back cover and remain unidentified (a photo of the beautiful singer is not even captioned).



The back of the album shows a lot, except information!





The bandleader and his strawman and arranger

EDDIE BAREFIELD AND HIS CALLOWAY'S ORCHESTRA

Eddie BAREFIELD is the conductor and arranger of the album (read our article above, [page 23](#)).

THE ORCHESTRA IS COMPOSED OF:

Lammar Wright, **Johnny Letman**, Herbie Jones, tp

Henderson Chambers, tb

Eddie Barefield, **Chauncey Haughton**, as

Maurice Simon, Bobby Greene, ts

Willard Brown, bar

Raymond Tunia, p

Herman Wright, b

Solomon Hall, d

(The musicians whose names are bolded have previously worked with Cab Calloway).

OUR CRITICAL LISTENING OF THE ALBUM

- *Born To Be Happy*: Cab appears to introduce himself to an audience that wouldn't know him (NB: all the lyrics of the album are available in the booklet of the Japanese edition on CD), but he keeps using the phrasing and an old-time arrangement known by his longtime fans...

- *Tzotskele* is a typical Jewish song, and Cab's singing was often compared to the cantor's. Several songs from his repertoire really sound to belong to the Yiddish tradition: *Who's Yehoodi?*, *A Bee Gezindt*, *Utt Da Zay*, *Nain Nain...* and even *Minnie The Moocher's* chorus scat could sound Yiddish with the Oy oy! You can obtain the CD box set "Black Sabbath," which explores the connections between Black and Jewish music traditions.

- *Sinful* is sung by Mauri Leighton and the Tunedrops. A simple song with no interest. At all.

- *The Beginn' of Sinnin'* belongs to the typical revues repertoire with call and response with the vocal group.

- *Sweeter than Sweet* could have been an old Calloway song those languorous ones he cherished. Mauri duets with Cab, but is featured on a separate verse. Her warm low register voice perfectly pairs with Cab's. The Tunedrops end the song with Cab.

- *Never Had It So Good* is by just Malcolm Dodds & The Tunedrops. Nice chorus by the saxophones.

- On the shining arrangement of *Minnie The Moocher*, Cab makes his then-typical final number of the '50s and '60s holding the longest low register note while the guys in the orchestra encourage him. We can find a similar performance in a Canadian television clip from 1958 on YouTube.

- *Copper Colored Gal* was created for a Manhattan Cotton Club revue in 1936. Cab has sung it hundreds of times on stage but seems to still appreciate it. The arrangement, as with the whole album, is mainstream with no risk at all.



- *I've Got The World On A String* is even older and is a gem by Harold Arlen, written for the Harlem Cotton Club in 1932. Listen to Cab's voice: pure, clear, and mature. One of the highlights of the album.

- *She's Tall, She's Tan, She's Terrific* has the same texture as *Copper Colored Gal* and is rendered like Cab has never stopped singing it since 1936!

- *Don't Worry 'Bout Me* is sung by Mauri Leighton. Because of her strong voicing, we're not worried at all for her...

- *St. James Infirmary* is a classic for Cab. The singing, the arrangement, nothing's new here but what a pleasure to hear it properly recorded.

Too bad the producers didn't decide to record a live album that would have sounded more accurate. This was not the custom at that time, and probably too technically difficult to set up. We miss somehow Cab's energy on stage and his gift of reacting to the audience.

A 7-inch for the younger generation

Note that during his contract with GONE, Cab Calloway recorded two other songs for the label, which discographers try to forget since their qualities are really hard to find... They were released in December 1957 on the 45 rpm and 78 rpm Gone 5018 ([see page 182](#)).



Those significantly more "rock" tracks were made to capture a younger audience... who was not fooled on this one! It was a bit like having an old uncle who sings rock for the youngsters...

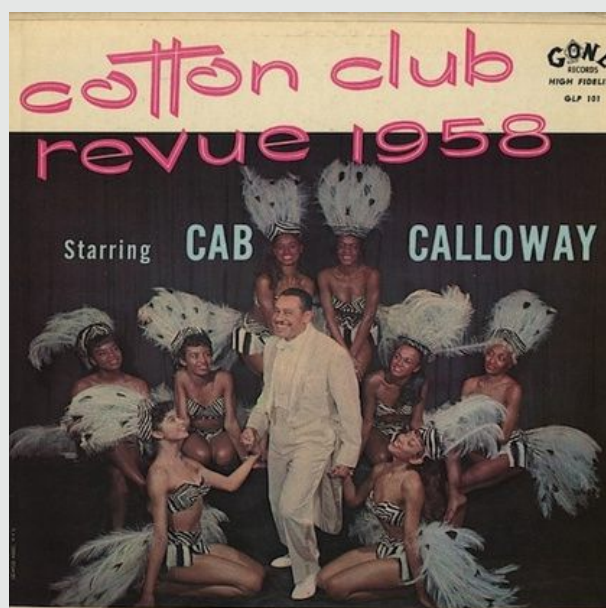
Released at the wrong time

Terrible fate for the album: it's released in March 1958, when the revue is on stage in Miami. It was supposed to be a good move for a producer. Unfortunately, for once, the weather in Florida is calamitous, and to avoid the cold, tourists are fleeing the beaches, hotels, and especially the theaters, which go empty within days. With the increasing deficits, the Cotton Club in Miami closed. And the revue will return on stage in December 1958 in Chicago, where fewer palm trees grow but where tourists are used to the snowy torments of the Windy City! But that's another story we tell in our forthcoming article on the website entitled "*3rd season: 1959: Chicago, South America and Manhattan.*"

Rediscovered 30 years later

30 years later, an unofficial edition on the Danish label OFFICIAL (read the article on our website about Gilles Petard, the French record producer behind this release) will bring a rediscovery of this record to a new public.

And 46 years later, in 2014, it appeared on CD in Japan via Warner. No new titles or bonuses. Note, however, that this digital reissue is in Mono.



The stereo release on Gone.

Just Completed Portraying
THE LIFE OF W. C. HANDY IN PARAMOUNT'S
"ST. LOUIS BLUES"

MY THANKS TO

PARAMOUNT,

Producer ROBERT SMITH

Director ALLEN REISNER

Musical Director NELSON RIDDLE

To My CO-STARS . . .

PEARL BAILEY

RUBY DEE

MAHALIA JACKSON

EARTHA KITT

ELLA FITZGERALD

JUANO HERNANDEZ

CAB CALLOWAY

And A Great Crew!

Jat King Cole

DECEMBER 1957



The new cast is already posted on the walls of the Cotton Club, in Miami Beach. This forthcoming revue is expected to be a new smash hit...

DECEMBER 1957

CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

As one says, "the murderer
always returns to
the scene of the crime"...
Sally Blair is back in Miami,
and her producers are
splurging on a press ad
twice the size of that
of her former boss,
Cab Calloway...
Irony, you've got us.

The Miami Herald,
FL, Dec 23, 1957



5

Guest on TV Show, "Cross Canada Hit",
Montreal, QC, CANADA

6-13 ca

Chez Club, Chicago, IL (TBC)

13 ca

Nuffie Calloway leaves the New York hospital
before Cab flies to Florida

14

Cab attends the Orange Blossom Classic and
Festival, Miami, FL

20-Late February 1958 (8:30, 11:30 + 3rd
show on Saturday, special "Milkman's
matinee show" at 3 am on Dec 31)

1958 Edition of The Cotton Club Revue,
Cotton Club, Miami, FL

NAACP GUESTS PAY \$70,000;



Dinner chairman Jackie Robinson (l.) chats with Roy Wilkins, Duke Ellington.

Thirteen hundred persons, including Gov. Averell Harriman and TV star Steve Allen, honored band-leader-composer Duke Ellington and baseball executive Branch Rickey Sr. at the \$100 per couple NAACP Freedom Fund dinner in New York. Paying tribute at



Jackie welcomes guest speaker, Gov. Averell Harriman, in group with singer Margaret Tynes, M.C. Steve Allen and Cab Calloway

HONOR RICKEY AND ELLINGTON

the Roosevelt Hotel, the guests poured \$70,000 in dinner subscriptions, payments on \$500 NAACP life memberships and contributions into NAACP coffers. Included was a \$1,100 donation from singing star Nat King Cole and a \$400 gift from Eleanor Roosevelt.



Ex-Judge J. Waties Waring (l.), Eloise Bishop, Archibald Carey chat.



Jackie hugs honor guest Rickey, his former boss.



After dinner, Jackie pauses with wife, Rachael, and Joe Louis.

Pictures of the event that occurred on November 29, JET, Dec 12, 1957

Cotton Club Show Inks J. Randolph

Jimmy Randolph, Decca Records star, has been signed to appear as featured singer in the **Cab Calloway** Cotton Club Revue opening in Miami Beach Dec. 20, it was announced Monday by Ted Wornor Associates. The good-looking, young

Brooklyn baritone, who is a graduate of Long Island University, sang the lead role of "Husky Miller" in the City Center production of "Carmen Jones" last summer. He has appeared on the Steve Allen and Jackie Gleason shows. Randolph is currently making his last New York appearance prior to the Miami engagement, at Brooklyn's Club Elegante. The singer's latest Decca release "Way Beyond The Hills" was issued last week.

New York Age, NY, Dec 7, 1957

Cotton Club Cast Selected

Entire cast has now been set for the 1958 edition of the Miami Beach Cotton Club revue, with Cab Calloway in headline spot and the Four Step Brothers as extra added attractions.

Songstress Mauri Leighton will receive top supporting billing, along with television song star Jimmy Randolph. Others in the cast include the Hines Kids, Slappy White, the Tune Drops and Paul Meeres, Sr. and La Raine.

Dance production numbers, which will be staged by Lee Sherman, will be performed by the Norma Miller Dancers.

Benny Davis, songwriter and producer, is author and composer for the forthcoming Cotton Club show.

Miami News, FL, Dec 14, 1957



'PLEASED TO MITT YA' — Two of the nation's top entertainment personalities, TV star Steve Allen (left) and bandleader Cab Calloway, exchange greetings during a chance meeting in New York at a civic dinner. Calloway, who headed a successful nightclub revue in Miami last year, is also much in demand as a television guest star. (Newspress Photo).

Atlanta Daily World, GA, Dec 18, 1957

Mills To Publish Cotton Club Score

NEW YORK—A new Cotton Club Revue—1958 Edition, is opening at the Cotton Club in Miami Beach, Florida, December 20th, and Mills Music will publish the score. Tunes were written by Benny Davis (writer of "Margie") and Clay Boland. The show stars Cab Calloway and features Maurie Leighton, the 4 Step Brothers, Jimmy Randolph and others.

Mills' association with music from the Cotton Club has been a rewarding one. Through the years, the club has produced such standards as "Stormy Weather", "I've Got The World On A String", "Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea", "Don't Worry 'Bout Me" and many others.

Some of the new songs featured in the 1958 revue include: "Sweeter Than Sweet", "Never Had It So Good", "Sinful", "The Beginn' Of Sinner" and "Big Town Blues".

Mills is planning a big promotional campaign in conjunction with the traditional event.

At the same time, the pubbery announced the acquisition of another European musical catalog, the third the company has added in the past month. The latest addition to the Mills fold is the catalog of Edition Canzonetta of Berlin, Germany. This catalog includes compositions by such contemporary German composers as Hans Berry, Werner Bochmann, Heinz Kiessling, Simon Knapp, Josef Nielsen, Peter Thomas, Gustav Trost and Will Williams, among others.

Cashbox, Dec 14, 1957

CAB CALLOWAY whose show "Cotton Club Revue" socked 'em in Miami last season was offered a blank check to name his own figure for engagement this winter.

The Chicago Defender, IL, Dec 28, 1957

... Cab Calloway is quite the fashion plate in the Cotton Club review. He wears silver and black tuxedo jackets, silver, white and blue full dress, and a gambler's outfit in his two hour revue.

The Miami Herald, FL, Dec 29, 1957



1958 EDITION COTTON CLUB REVUE

Starring

CAB CALLOWAY

Opening Dec. 20, COTTON CLUB, Miami Beach

Mgt. BILL MITTLER, 1619 Broadway, New York

Variety, Dec 18, 1957

Miami News, FL, Dec 20, 1957

★ OPENING TONIGHT ★

New! 1958 EDITION OF THE
COTTON CLUB REVUE

Starring—
CAB CALLOWAY

Mauri LEIGHTON ★ Jimmy RANDOLPH

★ PAUL MEERES and LaRAINE ★ NORMA MILLER DANCERS

★ SLAPPY WHITE ★ MALCOLM DODD & The TUNE DROPS

★ The HINES BROS.

Cotton Club Lovelies

CAST OF 60

PRODUCED AND WRITTEN BY—
BENNY DAVIS ★ **2 SHOWS NIGHTLY** ★ **FOUR STEP BROTHERS**

DANCE AND MUSICAL NUMBERS STAGED BY—
LEE SHERMAN

DINNER SHOW 8:30
SUPPER SHOW 11:30
3 SHOWS SATURDAY

EXTRA ADDED ATTRACTION!

SPECIAL ENTERTAINMENT THE COCKTAIL LOUNGE NO COVER NO MINIMUM

\$4.95 FOOD OR BEVERAGE

FOR RESERVATIONS, PHONE
JE 4-4721

COTTON CLUB
1271 DADE BLVD.
MIAMI BEACH

WANT TO START A CLUB? HERE'S AN IDEA OF COSTS

Do you want to produce a top-flight nightclub show?

Before you say yes, consider this list of figures, released by the Cotton Club. It's a rundown of pre-opening costs for the Cab Calloway revue opening Friday.

Costumes, \$20,000; musical arrangements, \$2,000; transportation for cast, by air from New York, \$2,500; four weeks of rehearsal time, \$5,000; stage and lighting arrangements, \$2,500, and stage settings, \$2,500.

Add to this \$1,000 or more for construction of additional dressing rooms, fees for full-time doctor to attend the cast, and other unforeseeable miscellaneous expenses, and that's the "nut" you've got to get over before you start counting one-for-me and one-for-you with your partners.

The Miami News, FL,
Dec 15, 1957



CAB CALLOWAY, who is heading this year's Cotton Club Revue in Miami, saw to it that his beloved "Nuffie" was safely home from the hospital before leaving for Florida. The Calloways are pictured as they attended a recent movie premiere in New York.

The St. Louis Argus, MO, Dec 27, 1957



HERB KELLY
Amusements

Cab Calloway's Cotton Club

This year's edition of the Cotton Club revue is faster, louder and better in just about every department. The pace never slackens from the moment Cab Calloway appears, gives the orchestra the downbeat and a flock of guys and gals come on in brilliant costumes and pop open the show.

It's a toe-tapping, stomping production with a lot of glitter and new talent and Marleneauque in all respects.

Jimmy Randolph, a mighty pleasing singer, has a sock number in "Treatment Symphony," which gives him the chance to swing into Irish, Italian, Jewish and Negro numbers. The crowd wouldn't let the man go.

PAUL MEERS AND LARABINE are a real crazy calypso team with an untold drummer as frenetic as they are. The Four Bay Brothers, who have been seen here in the top supper clubs, are in class. They tap and clomp and do wicked spins.

Maeel Leighton, a tall gal with a mellow voice comes over well, and Happy White is a rare thing, a comedian with fresh material.

There are more acts and the chorus is large, but they move too fast to count them.

Calloway, the man-who-never-grows-old, is slick in the top singing role and Benny Davis has written him a catchy new one, "Beware This Beast."

The show is rapid and as one act is leaving off another is coming on. How they stand the pace is a mystery. But that's their business. The audience was interested only in entertainment. And that's what they got. Plenty of it.

The Miami News, FL, Dec 23, 1957

SAM BARKEN, one of the all-time famous names in Miami Beach night club history, is back in action. He'll manage the Cotton Club (formerly Beachcomber) where Cab Calloway and his star-studded revue start Dec. 20 . . .

The Star Ledger, Newark, NJ, Dec 8, 1957

A VOICE THAT CAPTIVATED CAB

THE SWEETER THAN SWEET MAURI LEIGHTON



Tall, elegant, and possessed of what critics called “unique histrionic as well as vocal ability,” Mauri Leighton was the kind of performer who could make even seasoned professionals stop and take notice. When influential columnist Walter Winchell declared that talent scouts should pay attention to this rising star, Cab Calloway was listening.

Born in Savannah, Georgia, in 1927, Leighton had already carved out a respectable niche in Hollywood by the time she caught Calloway’s ear. First known as Marilyn Kilroy in the mid-Forties, she sang with Jimmy Lunceford Orchestra. She was later known as Mauri Lynn. On screen, she’d shared emotional scenes with John Barrymore Jr. in *The Big Night* (Joseph Losey, 1951) – their interracial moment was considered groundbreaking for its time. Later came roles in *Carmen Jones* alongside Dorothy Dandridge and *Anna Lucasta* with Esther Williams. She’d even performed with the incomparable Nat King Cole, proving she could hold her own with the era’s biggest names. She was first married to the blues guitarist Herman Mitchell.

FROM BROOKLYN CABARETS TO THE COTTON CLUB IN MIAMI

By 1957, Leighton had made her New York café debut in spring with the Timmie Rogers Revue, “No Time For Squares,” at the Elegante in Brooklyn before staying at Mister Kelly’s in Chicago in November, when fate intervened. The Cotton Club Revue had been a hit in Miami, and critics were buzzing about this striking performer who reminded them of Lena Horne. Walter Winchell, that powerful voice of American entertainment, believed she deserved better than small venues. His words carried weight, and Cab Calloway – never one to ignore good advice from an old friend – decided to take a chance.

For the Cotton Club Revue of 1958, Calloway needed a new leading lady. Sallie Blair, Diane Lefti, and Abbey Lincoln had all held the spotlight before, but now it was Mauri’s turn. *The Pittsburgh Courier* could barely contain its enthusiasm when the casting was announced in February 1958: “Mauri Leighton, Benny Davis’ find, is a tall, slender songbird – truly tall, tan and terrific. She combine[s] the better qualities of the top thrushes, Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandridge. Miss Leighton is very young, very pretty and sings a song with unique histrionic as well as vocal ability.”

IN THE SPOTLIGHT WITH CAB FOR A SHORT TIME

Working with Cab Calloway was the break Leighton had been waiting for. The Cotton Club Revue represented, if not the pinnacle of Black entertainment, an important stepping stone in her career, and to be chosen as the female lead was no small honor.

On the Gone album “Cotton Club Revue 1958” recorded in November and December 1957, her performance of Benny Davis’ catchy tune “Sweeter than Sweet” (with backing vocals by Malcolm Dodds & The Tunedrops) showcased both her ability to complement Cab’s showmanship and her skill as a solo artist.



Mauri Leighton, when she was still called by her birth name, Marilyn Kilroy, and sang with Jimmy Lunceford.



Noticed in Losey’s movie in 1951 for her interracial scene with John Barrymore, Mauri appeared twice on the cover of JET (1952 and 1954), as “Hollywood’s unknown negro beauty.”



The comparisons to Lena Horne followed her everywhere – the ultimate compliment for a Black female vocalist in that era. When she appeared on The Jack Paar TV Show on January 13, 1958, just days after her start in the revue, it seemed like her star was truly ascending. The press dubbed her “another Lena Horne,” and for a brief moment, everything seemed possible. Her “boss,” Cab Calloway, only appeared on the same NBC show two days after her! Nevertheless, in his January 25, 1958, *Miami Times* article reviewing Mauri’s TV appearance, the journalist noted that “Mauri Leighton slightly shocked Miamians when she insisted on wearing her very dressy sequined ‘pants’ on stage.” He added: “To us she’s a beautiful girl with a beautiful figure for wearing clothes – but there just isn’t any voice.” Mauri Leighton would again be the guest of Jack Paar in May of the same year.

On stage, Mauri Leighton performed several numbers: “She’s Tall, She’s Tan, She’s Terrific,” a duet with Cab on “Sweeter than Sweet,” and appeared in the finale on “Never Had It So Good.”



Success was there, but the weather wasn’t: the catastrophic low temperatures of spring 1958 scared away tourists throughout Florida. Rain followed terrible fog, and business fell off. The Beachcomber closed at the end of February 1958, leaving the whole troupe out of work. Thanks to her recent success, in a snap, Mauri Leighton got a new engagement at Gray’s Lounge Inn in Miami Beach. From now on, Cab Calloway and The Cotton Club were on a different path—even if in 1960 at Paris, France’s Olympia, Mauri would appear in “La Revue Nègre 1960 – Harlem Heatwave” in a number titled “From the Cotton Club.”

WHEN PROMISE MEETS TRAGEDY

In December 1958, Leighton released a single that would become one of her final recordings, despite numerous stage appearances (in 1959, *Variety*’s critic wrote about her that she had “a voice big enough to fill the Pentagon”). Her career, which had briefly burned so bright during the Miami Cotton Club period, was about to be extinguished in the most brutal way imaginable.

Eleven years later, in 1969, Mauri Leighton and her 20-year-old stepdaughter were murdered – victims of the violent world that had ensnared her husband, Pat Jackson. Jackson, a Harlem auto salesman, had gotten involved with drug trafficking, and when debts came due, it was his family who paid the ultimate price.

Today, the “Cotton Club Revue of 1958” album stands as one of the most enduring testaments to Mauri Leighton’s talent. There’s something in her voice – a combination of technical skill and emotional depth – that explains why, for a brief shining moment, she seemed destined for greatness. In this recording, you can hear what Walter Winchell heard, what Cab Calloway saw, and what critics meant when they compared her to Lena Horne.



The whole cast of
The Cotton Club Revue of 1958
is available at:
WWW.THEHIDEHOBLOG.COM



RECORD RELEASE AND REVIEW FOR DECEMBER 1957

*DENOTES VOCALS BY CAB



TOMORROW NIGHT* (TAKE 18!)

Gone 5018 was only the 17th EPs released by the young label GONE, created in April 1957. Side A is a cover of Lonnie Johnson's 1948 classic and Lavern Baker's revival of 1954. Note that the songs were also released on 78 RPM with the reference number G-81.

Variety (Dec 11, 1957):

"TOMORROW NIGHT" is a fair blending of the ballad and blues patterns.

"BLUES CAME TO DINNER" has Cab Calloway singing out a pleasing blues melody with an r'n'r choral support.



THE BLUES CAME TO DINNER*

A THREE-SEASON JOURNEY

TO THE 1958 REVUE AND BEYOND!



May 1958: Cab Calloway arrives in Paris

The Cotton Club Revue remained, until this magazine, an unexplored Cab Calloway's ambitious three-season journey between 1956 and 1959. It was ambitious in resurrecting the legendary Cotton Club name with its African American artists in segregated Miami, and in staging a troupe of almost 50 performers backed by a jazz orchestra at a moment when television and rock 'n' roll were dictating new tastes.

At the heart stood Cab Calloway, the magnetic Hi-De-Ho man whose career would anchor and define this revue. For Cab, then in his late forties, this was both a return to his roots and a bold reinvention — again touring in a "long-hair" role, after his *Porgy & Bess* years. The revue showcased his versatility: getting audiences to sing along his old standards, or surprising them with routines like his Shakespearean parody of *Romeo and Juliet*, lampooning the emerging rock 'n' roll craze.

SEASON 1 (1956-1957): From Triumph to Tragedy

When you look at this past 1956-1957 season, you notice how fast the success came—30,000 people attended within ten days. But tragedy struck swiftly: the venue was robbed on January 7th, and just ten days later, producer Murray Weinger died of a heart attack at age 39.

Despite these setbacks, the show had to go on! And it went to the Mecca of nightclubs, Las Vegas. After a successful 12-week run, the New York experience at Central Park's Theatre Under the Sky suffered bad weather and reviews.

The Cotton Club Revue went on pause for summer until the next winter season in Miami. Meanwhile, Cab Calloway didn't stop to hide-hi: in the fall, the St. Louis Blues movie, along Nat King Cole was his first supporting act role. Invited by Nat King Cole on his TV show, Cab Calloway proved once again that he was a "television natural."

Cab Calloway and two Cotton Club dancers at the Washington Carter Barron Amphitheater (photo by Abbie Rowe), July 4, 1957



SEASON 2 (1957-1958): Weather, Woes, and Persistence

The second season promised to capitalize on the first's success but instead delivered a cascade of misfortunes. Cab returned to Miami with a reorganized cast, including young tap prodigies Maurice and Gregory Hines, and torch singer Mauri Leighton.

The production began promisingly with 13 elaborate numbers spanning 90 minutes, featuring Cab in new signature pieces like "That Hi de Ho Man in Hi de Ho Land." Bad luck began when musical director and bandleader Eddie Barefield broke his leg. It went on with Cab's new nemesis: the weather. Indeed, Florida's catastrophic weather of spring 1958—unprecedented cold snaps and relentless rain—devastated tourism. As temperatures plummeted to 26°F, hotel and bar owners reported 20% decreases in business. The Cotton Club couldn't survive the climatological assault and closed in the end of February.

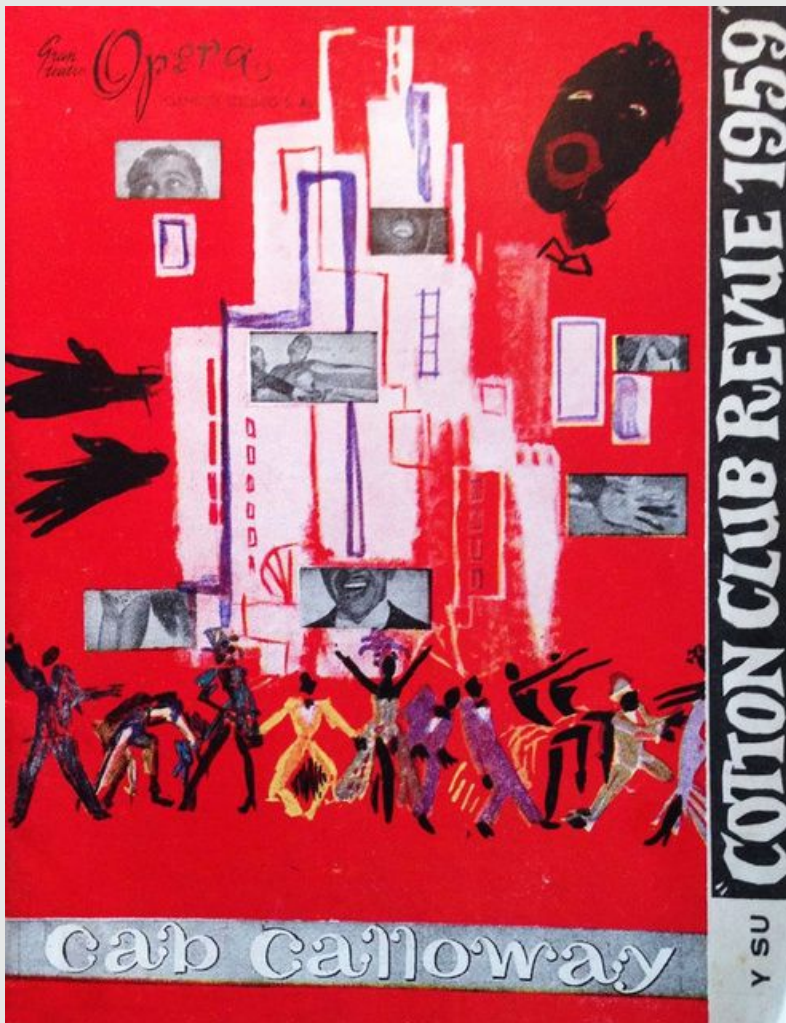
Never say again, "Break a leg!" to Eddie Barefield or Cab!. It's bad luck and bad weather ahead! (JET, Feb 13, 1958).

What could have been the year's sole lasting achievement was the *Gone* album, featuring the Cotton Club Revue orchestra. This recording captured the musical sophistication Calloway brought to the production... but was released in March 1958 at a moment nobody could see The Cotton Club Revue on stage anymore!

But Cab, ever the professional, refused to be deterred. While the Cotton Club shuttered, he maintained his visibility through television appearances, including Ed Sullivan's show. His movie, *St. Louis Blues*, was a flop at the box office and he was barely noticed by critics. He returned to one-night club appearances in smaller venues, in Montreal or Phoenix. He found time (and a good promoter!) for a brief European sojourn, performing at Paris's Olympia, though political demonstrations and Algerian War protests cut his engagement short. Bad luck again. A short engagement in the summer of 1958 with the touring *Porgy and Bess* opera helped him to recover with large audience and good reviews.



SEASON 3 (1958-1959): Global Ambitions and Final Curtains



Elaborate program for a fancy revue at the swankiest and most expensive venue of Rio de Janeiro.

The Golden Room at the Copacabana Hotel became his stage, with packed houses paying premium prices.

The 22-member troupe, featuring returning favorites like Norma Miller and new attractions like singer Leslie Scott, conquered Brazilian audiences.

From Rio to São Paulo, then Buenos Aires and Montevideo, the revue proved Cab's international appeal remained potent. Argentine critics praised his emcee skills above all other performers, though they noted the challenge of coordinating American artists with local musicians.

The third and final season opened in Chicago, Cab's original stomping grounds from his Sunset Café days with Louis Armstrong. This homecoming would energize the Hi-De-Ho king, who had recently completed a new stereo album for RCA Victor. His appearance on CBS's "Your Hit Parade" revealed his sardonic view of changing musical tastes: "You're the King of Hi-De-Ho, aren't you?" asked host Johnny Desmond. Cab's response: "Yeah, but look what Rock-and-Roll did to Hi-De-Ho! I feel like King Farouk!"

The revue's most adventurous chapter unfolded in South America. Landing in Rio de Janeiro on April 26, 1959, Cab declared, "Coming to Rio is an old dream that comes true."

The triumphant return to New York at the Copper Door Café in September 1959 seemed to promise a renaissance. Located on Broadway between 50th and 51st Street, the venue aimed to restore "Negro shows and showmen to their rightful place in the nightlife and entertainment world." Cab's opening night drew luminaries including Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, and Sarah Vaughan.

Yet fate intervened once more. Despite critical acclaim and initial success, financial problems forced the Copper Door's closure by late October. Performers went unpaid, unions intervened, and the venue reportedly lost \$50,000 in investor funds.

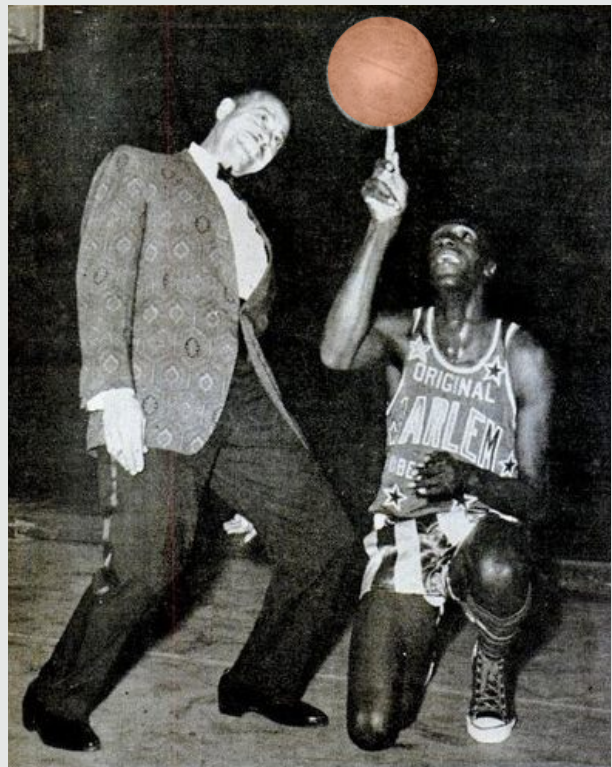
What's next?

Resilience and Bounce Back

The Cotton Club Revue's three-year run epitomized both Cab Calloway's indomitable spirit and the challenges facing veteran performers (and specifically a Black one!) in a rapidly changing entertainment landscape. Despite robberies, deaths, weather disasters, political upheavals, financial collapses, and the rising tide of rock 'n' roll, Cab maintained his artistry and professionalism throughout. The revue represented more than nostalgia—it was Calloway's declaration that sophisticated African American entertainment deserved its place alongside emerging popular forms. While the production faced every conceivable obstacle, from segregation laws requiring special ID cards in Miami to creditors shuttering New York venues, Cab's commitment never wavered.

Still, in his article for *Sepia Magazine* (January 1960), "What Became of Cab Calloway," Dan Burley explains: "Efforts to extend the run of The Cotton Club Revue to other cities outside Miami brought only headaches. It seems that it had been born in Miami and Miami was where it was doomed to die. It never meant anything outside the Florida resort city."

By 1960, as some of the cast members regrouped for European tours under different names, the Cotton Club Revue had run its course. But it had accomplished something remarkable: proving that Cab Calloway, the master of Hi-De-Ho, remained a vital force capable of commanding stages from Miami to Buenos Aires, from Las Vegas to Paris—a testament to both his enduring charisma and the timeless appeal of authentic showmanship. "What's next on my schedule?" as Cab Calloway would ask...



*Next on Cab Calloway's schedule:
a three-year contract to tour
with the Harlem Globetrotters,
all over the United States.
No intermission for Cab...*



**Our full-length articles about the
3 seasons of The Cotton Club Revue
are available at:
WWW.THEHIDEHOBLOG.COM**



**COTTON CLUB
DOES IT AGAIN!
CRITICS AGREE!**

GEORGE BOURKE IN THE
HERALD

"... Cotton Club has banner crop again ... As good as last season? Far better ... double my decision on this ... Patrons still humming Benny Davis' "Sweeter Than Sweet" when they leave club."

HERB KELLY IN THE
NEWS

"... The Cotton Club revue is faster, louder and better ... a toe-tapping, stomping production ... Harlemaesque in all respects ... audience was interested in entertainment. And that's what they got. Plenty of it."

PAUL BRUUN IN THE
SUN

"... This revue is better than the one which broke records for entertainment and attendance last season ... The show gets off to a fast start with a special Benny Davis number ... This is a show it is a pleasure to recommend."

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CAB CALLOWAY • STEP BROS.
AND A CAST OF 60**

PRODUCED AND
WRITTEN BY **BENNY DAVIS**
DANCE & MUSICAL
NUMBERS STAGED BY **LEE SHERMAN**

RES. for NEW YEAR'S EVE — JE 4-4721

The Miami Herald, FL, Dec 27, 1957



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in the life of Cab Calloway.*

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CAB CALLOWAY DAY-BY-DAY

THE MOVIE "SENSATIONS OF 1945"

THE HEPSTER'S DICTIONARY

IKE QUEBEC AND THE NEW BANDSTAND

AFRS AND THE MANY BROADCASTS

AT THE ZANZIBAR,
HOME OF THE STARS

SINGER DOTTY SAULTERS

NEW YEAR'S EVE
AT THE SHERMAN HOTEL

