

Charles Hyatt

Gains unanimous praise in London play

By Louis Marriott

The basement of Ambiance Restaurant, a stone's throw from Hyde Park, where a steel band nightly beats out the latest calypsoes, was the scene, this past fortnight, of a remarkable experiment,



CHARLES HYATT

For six days each week a 40-minute play called "The Electronic Nigger" has run two lunchtime shows a day to a full house of about 70 per show. They have come from all parts of London to witness this powerful little package. The audience have loved it, though many have admitted to not understanding it. And the critics have raved about it.

"The Electronic Nigger" is set in one of those ghastly evening classes in America (New York City Community College?), and Creative Writing ("E21" to the computer) is completely undermined by Mr. Carpentier (Charles Hyatt), the jargonprone "electronic nigger" who exudes socio-drama, wire-tapping and cybernetics.

In the end the instructor, Mr. Jones, gives up the struggle to reassert control over his class, while the star pupils become puppets faithfully acting out the absurd ritual dictated by Mr. Carpentier. The new technological terror triumphs over old traditional expression; so much so that Mr. Jones, who is the author of a well known book, in despair eschews creative writing. "Reading is the answer!" he declares.

"The Electronic Nigger" is well written, though its central theme is clouded by a sketchily drawn racial sub-theme, reflected in its title. The production was fairly competent, but with a hint of levity. The acting did full justice to the material it was

given, and undoubtedly the tour de force was the performance of Charles Hyatt. "Murder," and "Wind versus Polygamy."

The critics were unanimous. This Jamaican actor, who came to London as a comedian in 1961, is now acknowledged as a formidable serious actor. He has scored a number of notable recent television successes, for example, in "The

Blood Knot," "City 68," in praise of his performance as the electronic nigger. "Charles Hyatt, as Mr. Carpentier, overflows with lunatic self-confidence and struts magnificently," said The Guardian. The Times version was: "Charles Hyatt gives an admirably poised and commanding performance as the dehumanized eponymous hero. The Saturday Review spoke of "befittingly frenzied performances from Deborah Norton and Charles Hyatt" . . . And so forth, and so on.

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