But...are we right!

Are major movie makers ignoring blacks?

By Ida Peters
Theatrical Editor

Dear Mr. Hornstein:

In our July 2 AFRO, we printed an eight column strip on current movies now playing in mostly urban theatres under the heading "Why are major movie makers ignoring blacks?"

Robby Benson, the star of "One On One" is shown in a scene with the coach, G. D. Spradlin. Behind Benson is a black basketball player. As I said, he is un-named in the PHOTO Credit. Irefer to Pix 063-621.

I had lunch with Robby Benson here in Baltimore. I asked him who the black players were in "One On One". His answer was they were Colorado State University coaches and assistant coaches and their names were in the press book. Their names may be in the press book but I couldn't find them.

I don't feel that our photo underline was over-emotional or had anything to do with black pride.

When I go to the movies, I want to know more about the stars and even some of the bit players. Somebody in your organization goofed and failed to include bios in your press book on members of the team. In fact there are no pictures in my press book showing the entire team.

"One On One" is a movie that takes a back-handed slap at big-time college basketball.

At first viewing you have to admire the scrappy kid who takes on the establishment...the coach, the books, the tall players. Robby Benson can't be 5' 10" as the script says...because I stood beside him and looked him in the eye and I'm 5' 5".

By sheer guts the young pee wee makes the team.

At second viewing, in light of how basketball is structured today..."One On One" goes from short against tall to the hidden overtones of black against white.

We are printing your letter in full in hopes you will read on and answer my question. Are major movie makers ignoring blacks by failing to use the black press in major markets where blacks make up 50 per cent of the population?

And isn't it true that the black player was not identified in the photo credit?

Ida Peters

Robby Benson
Star of "One on One"

Pryor and Grier can act

by
Frederick I Douglass

"Greased Lightning," starring Richard Pryor and Pam Grier, is one of the best movies ever made with blacks playing all of the major roles.

Sure, there have been beaucoup flicks like "Superfly" and "Shaft," but these were fiction and far removed from reality.

"Greased Lightning" is for real because it is waxed on the true story of the first black man to break into the big time of professional race car driving. It is a hellified flick.

Richard Pryor stars as Wendell Scott, a man who was wasting his exceptional driving abilities on running moonshine until he gets his first opportunity to get on the race track.

The story takes place in the deep South and Scott is greeted by hostility and scorn from the other drivers. He is even made a target with a prize being offered to the man that could run him off the track. Corey's first race was supposed to be a moneymaking joke to attract people to the race course to see the black man get slaughtered by hites. But Scott knew what he was doing, managed to stay on the track and finished fourth in the race. And it wasn't his last race.

• • •

The racing fever had gotten a hold on Scott and it became his life long profession. The rest of the story deals with Scott's triumphs and failures as he strives to get to the top of the heap in his profession. Scot, in fact, made history by winning several of the nation's major races.

The story line of "Greased Lightning" is simple enough that it can be understiod by anyone from eight ti eighty. While the kind of movie that you there is some swearing, it can take your children to because the quality of the movie outweighs the impact of them hearing a few curse words.

The most fascinating aspect of the movie is that it shows that Richard Pryor and Pam Grier have considerable abilities in their profession, something that has not always come out in their previous movies.

Pryor has had better roles than Grier and has had an opportunity to do a bit of character exploration in flicks like "Lady Sings the Blues" and "Silver Streak" as well as "Bingo Long and the Traveling All-Stars."

But, he has always played the comic character, the buffoon who was there to be the pawn or whipping boy of the ither characters, or he played a role with so little time on the screen that it made no difference what his role was supposed to be in terms of the theme and plot of the movie.

In "Greased Lightning" Pryor dominates the screen from the beginning to the end if the movie. And he does it well, shaping he character of endell Scott into a life size role that would land Pryor some bigger and better parts in the movies.

The real surprise of the flick is Pam Grier who plays Scott's wife. Grier's roles in the past have been very shallow in that they required her to display no acting ability whatsoever.

While her performance in "Grease Lightning" is not of Academy Award caliber, she does get an opportunity to show that she is capable of more than pistol-whipping and karate chopping people while displaying her lovely physique and gorgeous face. It seems that the taste of black moviegoers is shifting and movie makers need to produce more flicks like "Sounder" and "Learning Tree" if they are going to satisfy the desire of blacks for movies if better quality.

What's Happening

'Bubbling' bubbling at Mechanic

"Bubbling Brown Sugar" is still bubbling at the New Mechanic Theatre through July 31.

Arthur Mitchell's Dance Theatre of Harlem is now playing through July 24 at the Carter Barron Amphitheatre in D.C. A glorious "Porgy and Bess" is at the Opera House of the Knennedy Center.

"My Fat Friend" is at the Fells Point Theatre Friday and Saturday.

Lily Tomlin opens at the National Theatre in D.C. in her one-woman show "Appearing Nightly."

Eddie (Lockjaw) Davis and the Harry (Sweets) Edison Quintet are at Blues Alley in Georgetown. The Dukes of Dixieland open Monday.

• • •

Stars of the Lawrence Welk Show are at Shady Grove Music Theatre, Friday, Aug. 5. Currently Rock Hudson is appearing in the musical "Camelot."

Rich Little and The Mills Brothers open at Painters Mill, Aug. 9.

Shot Gun is appearing at the Palace this Friday and Saturday. Their hit records are "Hot Line" and "Mutha Funk."

Phyllis Hyman is at the Palace Monday singing "Loving You, Losing You"

Charles Richardson's First Annual Gong Show is at Emerald Gardens July 23 at 9 p.m. Guest Judges are Willie Richardson, Lenny Moore, Lydell Mitchell, John Outlaw, Jerome Monfred, and Al Parker.

• • •

More than 4,000 AFRO Clean Blockers will get a chance to go to the movies through the courtesy of Jack Fructman and J. F. Theatres. This year the movie parties are on Wednesdays at 8 a.m. at the Hippodrome.

Blocks showing the most improvement will be given tickets at the AFRO Clean Block meetings. The movie parties are July 27, Aug. 3 and Aug. 10. You have to attend the meetings to get the tickets.

Movie producer complains

Dear AFRO:

A copy of your newspaper (attached) was sent to my office regarding the use of "black basketball players."

You wrote that the majority of basketball players in "One On One" were black and assistant coaches at CSU. You said they were unnamed in the credits.

Attached, also, please find a copy of our credit list; note the names, Floyd Kerr and George Walls. Floyd played the part of "Jomo Wade," the black basketball player who was the star of the Western University basketball team. Floyd is indeed a coach at CSU, theirr only black coach.

• • •

Additionally, I'd like to point out George Walls, who played the part of "Wheeler," the black basketball player whose ankle was broken in the final game.

Please be advised these were the only two basketball players besides Robby Benson, the star, and Cory Faucher, his friend, Tom, who are named in any of our credits. Both of these men are black.

• • •

All of us at Warner Bros. wanted to be certain to get a reaction from the black community to our film, "One On One." To that end, in June 1977, we contacted the NAACP. Fourthousand members of this most vital and important group convened to welcome Mr. Hooks in St. Louis. A screening of the film was held for this body in which special pains were taken to ask for criticism. The the black community was group unanimously held inherent in this motion pic that nothing derogatory to ture.

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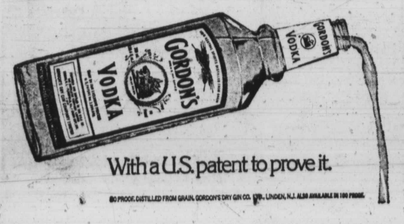

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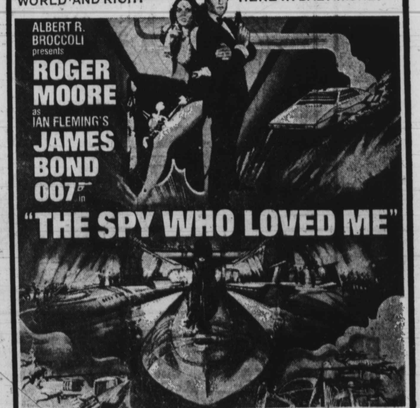
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William Curry joins BSO as 1977-78 guest conductor

Welcome! William Curry

William Henry Curry has been named Guest Conductor of the Baltimore Symphony for the 1977-78 season. He will take up his position immediately, conducting two concerts in the Orchestra's "Starlight" open air series at Tregon Ridge Park on July 31 and August 3.

Announcing Mr. Curry's appointment, BSO Music director Sergiu Comissiona said, "I am delighted to welcome William Curry to the Baltimore Symphony Of the many conductors who auditioned for this new position, Mr. Curry was the most outstanding. I was impressed by his warm and outgoing personality, as well as by his musicianship and his sure handling of the Orchestra. I am confident he will do well, and commend him most highly to our Baltimore Symphony audiences."

Before joining the Baltimore Symphony, William Curry was most recently assistant conductor of the Richmond Symphony and of the Richmond Symphonia chamber orchestra. He was also principal conductor of the Richmond Youth Symphony and associate director of the Kennerdell, Pennsylvania, Baroque Music Festival.

Born in Pittsburgh in 1954, William Curry played a number of insruments in his school band before he started conducting at the age of fourteen. He studied clarinet with Donald Ferrante, piano with Freeman Koberstein, violin with Eugene Reichenfeld, and viola with William Berman and others becoming Principal Viola with the American Youth Symphony and Oberlin Orchestra. At Oberlin he studied conducting and composition as well as viola, with Robert Baustian and Richard Hoffman, respectively. He also studied conducting with Richard Lert, Samuel Jones, and Phillip Spurgeon at the American Symphony orchestra League's Conductors' Workshops. At the University of Pittsburgh he did research on the cantatas of J. S. Bach and on the compositions of Oliver Messien; at Carnegie-Mellond University he studied harmony, composition, counterpoint, and chamber music.

Although he was still a senior at Oberlin when he was offered the position of assistant conductor at Richmond, William Curry was already and experienced orchestral conductor, having served as assistant conductor of the Wilkinsburg, Pa., Symphony Orchestra, the Murryeville, Pa., Symphony and the Oberlin Orchestra, and as music conductor of the Carnegie Institute Theatre and the Oberlin Contemporary Music Chamber Orchestra, together with numerous guest conducting appearances.

Curry, whose assurance and substantial presence as a conductor belie his own youth, has taken a special interest in young performers and youthful audiences. At Richmond he served as conductor of the Richmond Symphony Youth Wind Ensemble and a year later was named Principal Conductor of the Richmond Symphony Youth Orchestra. He will be conducting many of the Baltimore Symphony's youth concerts and concerts in the schools.

His first concert with the Baltimore Symphony will be on Sunday, July 31, when he will conduct "An Evening with Cole Porter" in the "Starlight" series of open air concerts at Oregon Ridge Park. He will also conduct the Orchestra on Wednesday, August 3, in the final concert in this summer's "Starlight" concert series.

New Afrika Players off to New York

And you shall know of me
through
My children
For they will
Sing my spirit songs,
Dance my danger dance
Pronounce the passion of
poetic passages
Whisper my wise words
or, Scream them loud,
And there will be no possibility of misunderstanding
Through them, we shall
breathe as one.

The above poem by Tammarra Makell is the theme behind the new play by Angela Savage, "Once Upon Dream, I Came Upon Myself" being presented by The New Afrika Players in New York for the next month.

The group left Baltimore this week and will be presenting their play at Hazel Bryant's Total Afro-American Theatre in the Richard Allen Center for Culture and Art.

The group includes Angela Savage, Tammara Makell, Janet Carroll, Roslyn Maddoxx and Janice Collins. Besides work at Hazel Bryant's they will be doing street plays and will appear at Lincoln Center on September 1.

The play is set in a graveyard and portrays famous black women in our history; Mahalia Jackson, Billie Holiday, Harriett Tubman and Mary McLeod Bethune.

Janice Collins is founder and leader of the players who were first organized in October, 1975 at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

She graduated this year after serving her senior year as class president.

The New Afrika Players have a wide range of dramatic material. They have participated in the African Liberation Drive of Bethel AME Church and did a program for the Nation of Islam on Survival Day in Washington; and made an appearance at the Lawyers Wives Banquet.

Their repertoire consists of a wide range of material — from original plays to poetry, from African dance and African fashion shows to monologues of well known blacks.

E.C. Rice signs recording contract

Young, handsome E. J. Rice, just turned 21, is another young Baltimorean headed up the ladder of success.

He has just signed a contract with Million Dollar Records owned by Harold Melvin of Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes fame. He will be featured as a single and his records will be distributed by ABC Records.

E. J. for Eugene James has a voice like Teddy Pendergrass of recent Blue Note fame.

• • •

He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar (Lillian) Ross of W. North Avenue and is under the personal management of his brother, Nathaniel Rice, Olympic Management Services, Inc.

He attended St. Peter Claver's Church, Calverton Junior High, Carver Vocational and Coppin State.

E.C. Rice and brother Nat

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Janice Collins

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