FRANKLYN AJAYE:

Greatest Unknown Comic

Franklyn Ajaye is a street-wise comedian who has spent a lot of time hanging out on the corner during his life, earning a doctoral degree from the school of hard knocks.

Not the hard knocks of poverty and deprivation — but from constantly being kicked in the gluteous maximus for trying to be a black comedian that refuses to roll his eyes and hanky-head for white audiences.

"When you're black," states Franklyn Ajaye, "white people expect you to act stupid when you come on stage. They want to see you make a fool out of yourself.

"They want to see you grin and Tom for them, you know, shuffle your feet, fall down on your face, and tell jokes that make black people look foolish.

"I can't do that. I draw my humor from all phases of my life and people I've known, things I've seen. I've hung out on the corner, so I tell a lot of stories about what happens in the streets.

"But I've also been to college, so I can come out of the intellectual bag too. You know, it really throws white folks off when you come out on stage and start talking about things in the newspaper, things that really matter.

"Like this nuclear thing that just went down at Three-Mile Island. Hey man, I'll crack a few jokes about that to remind people that this thing is really serious.

"Or I might crack about Skippy, the peanut butter man sitting over in Washington and ask how can he govern a country when he can't make his beer-guzzling brother keep his pants zipped up.

"White people really don't want you to crack on them. Hey man, they'll laugh real quick and then almost swallow their laugh when they realize that the joke is on them — like they'll go 'hah!' and then purse their lips real tight so no more noise can come out.

"But the real problem for me is that since they don't want to hear my brand of truth, they don't buy my albums."

While Franklyn Ajaye's albums are not selling like hotcakes these PAGE 16

There are a lot of comedy albums by Franklyn Ajaye on the market, but as he puts it: "They're not selling like hot-cakes." In fact, a lot of people are unaware that the Lothario character played in the movie "Car Wash" was portrayed by Franklyn. And the truth is — he's a really funny guy.

By Frederick I. Douglass



Franklyn Ajaye

days, his face is seen on television at least once a month when "Car Wash" is the Monday or Tuesday night movie.

"Yeah, people are always seeing my mug on the video box when 'Car Wash' comes on," says Ajaye, "but they really don't know who I am.

"The funny thing is that I'm on the screen quite a bit during the movie, but people don't associate the character they see on screen with Franklyn Ajaye the comedian who makes albums.

"I'm not in a position like Richard Pryor so that they advertise my albums when the movie comes on. I really dig Richard Pryor as a person and professional comedian, but I don't envy him—

I just want to take his place so I can make the big bucks.

"Making money ain't no laughing matter. That's what this country is all about. To me the difference between the haves and the have-nots is freedom of choice.

"If you've got the bucks, you can do what you want to do. You can call the shots. When you ain't got the bucks, someone else calls the shots for you."

Presently, Franklyn Ajaye usually works as the warm-up act for other performers. The interview with him took place in the dressing room of the Cellar Door in Washington, D.C. where he was preparing audiences for the

frantic saxophone antics of Yusef Lateef.

Ajaye's humor complements jazz because his style of delivery is like a staccato saxophone or trumpet riff, very much along the styling and phrasing of comedian Lenny Bruce.

Another similarity between Ajaye and jazz artists is that there are often big gaps between recording sessions. Ajaye's latest album, "Don't Smoke Dope, Fry Your Hair," has been on the market for nearly two years and he doesn't really know when his next recording session will take place.

"Hey man, I'm just out here trying to stay afloat. I'm getting some gigs in clubs, but I need to get on the tube, because when people see and hear you on television, they buy your albums.

"I've been on a lot of shows like with Johnny Carson, Midnight Special, Rock Concert and others, but not lately.

"'Car Wash' is on the tube frequently, and maybe they will start showing the other movie I was in which was called 'Dandy, the All American Girl,' and maybe that will lead to another part in a movie.

"As far as recording goes, I'm talking to some people about doing another album, but right now things are in a holding pattern. But I'm going to shoot to the top of the comedy world.

"The only thing that can distract me from show business these days is chicks. Foxy ladies can hang me up for days. I really dig those fine brown-skinned, big-legged sisters."

-Poetrie (Continued from Page 5)

four years later holding our college degrees

and smiling at the kodak camera

i have such an album because i wanted to keep those memories of you being with me while we were together making memories.

Johnnie D. McCowan Long Beach, Calif.

