A talk with 'Action Jackson's' Carl Weathers

By H. Glover Cook

Meeting Carl Weathers, a.k.a. Action Jackson in person gives one the feeling that some clandestine adventure is about to begin, as soon as Weathers devulges the secret plans in the upcoming debriefing meeting. All of this is remarkable considering that the interview has just started, the two of you have just been introduced and are now shaking hands.

The secret plans refer to the types of roles he is so adept at portraying — secret agents, military commanders and of course Action Jackson, Weathers is so skillful at his craft that he can transplant your thoughts to adventure and action without the benefit of special effects make-up or costume. When he does have them—watch out.

Weathers has been on a national tour to promote the movie "Action Jackson." The AFRO interviewed him at his hotel in Washington, D.C. and discussed the behind the scenes work involved in making the picture.

We started our round of questioning with how the character Action Jackson was conceived. Weathers replied, "while shooting the movie the "Predator" in Mexico, Joel Silver (the producer of "Predator" and "Action Jackson") brought the idea into our conversation. I already had a character and title in mind. Next a talented screenwriter named Robert Reneau was brought in on the project and Lorimar Productions gave their approval to the movie. Then the actual shooting began.

Weathers told the AFRO that from start to finish this project took only ten months. In Hollywood a script can take years to be developed from a written story into a actual motion picture.

In his mental concept of what Action Jackson would be as a character, Weathers wanted Action to possess a sense of humor combined with emphathy and dedication. Lest any viewer think the Action Jackson, a Harvard law graduate and policeman is devoid of feeling for the plight of the everyday person, the script has included a love interest.

Vanity is the sultry attractive, drug-addicted singer that pierces the heart of Action Jackson. The chemistry between these two performers bring a highly charged atmosphere to the screen that fluctuates between that which is at times humorous, and at other times sensuous and romantic.

Weathers was pleased to have spotted the potential of Vanity's performance when he heard her audition for the part of Sydney Ash. Weathers said, "I was quite impressed with the script reading that Vanity gave. She brought both beauty and added dimension to the Sydney Ash role." It is to the credit of an actress when she can give some part of herself to what a writer has created or envisioned, and Vanity did just that.

When viewers share memories of their favorite Action Jackson scenes with Weathers, they never forget to mention the beauty shop operator Dee (played by Armelia McQueen). This character puncuates all her sentences with words beginning with the letter "D," a Weathers knowledges that this is a wonderful for the script written by Robert Reneau, but is difficult to successfully convey to screen audiences.

It is almost impossible to talk to Carl Weathers about his picture without discussing the seemingly impossible stunt coordination necessary to deliver the fantastic action feats that are punctuated throughout the movie. Chase scenes might be common to adventure pictures, but leading men running after taxicabs? And catching them?—Wow that is unique.

AFRO file photo

Carl Weathers in a scene from his t.v. series "Fortune Dane."

Wethers replied, "That scene may look effortless, but it took us days to complete it. We wanted it to have a genuine feel. A lot of talented stunt professionals gave their input. That is why the finished product came out so well."

Director Craig Bailey puts his knowledge to stunt coordination to good use in formulating original stunt scenes for the movie. Some of the actors such as Bob Minor, are also veteran stunt men, they bring a combination of skills to the film.

What Weathers neglects to discuss is his personal stunt contributions to the movie. He insisted upon many of the stunts being performed by himself rather than by stunt men doubles. All of this Weathers did to insure that "Action Jackson" became a hit. This experience is sure to have a positive influence on his acting career and all future screen productions.

Carl Weathers and Vanity in "Action Jackson."

Patti LaBelle headlines concert

Washington, DC—Multi-talented performer Patti LaBelle will headline a gala concert April 11 at the Kennedy Center to benefit the proposed National Afro-American Heritage Museum.

The concert, which begins at 8:00 p.m. in the Concert Hall, also will feature a special presentation by Honorary Chairman Lena Horne. All proceeds from the concert will benefit the Museum, planned as a world-class exhibition and educational facility in Washington, D.C., delineating the contributions of blacks to all aspects of American life. Planners are aiming for a 1996 opening of the Museum. For more information call (202) 667-6444.

The National Afro-American Heritage Museum is the primary project of the non-profit National Council for Education and Economic Development, Inc., (NCEED) and has already attracted significant support.

A joint resolution endorsing the Museum was unanimously adopted by Congress and signed into public law by President Reagan in 1986. Enabling legislation for the Museum is expected to be introduced in Congress this year.

Patti LaBelle

"When completed, the National Afro-American Heritage Museum will serve as a national symbol of America's heritage, inspiring and enriching the lives of all who struggle to overcome adversity in its many forms," said Tom Mack, NCEED president.

He noted that the April 11 benefit concert will enable NCEED to begin building an endowment and to hire additional professional staff.

Mack said costs of the concert will be covered by private and corporate sponsors and patrons. Other honorary chairmen of the benefit concert include D.C. Mayor and Mrs. Marion Barry, Jr., D.C. Delegate Walter E. Fauntroy and Mr. and Mrs. Lew Wasserman — Mr. Wasserman is chairman of entertainment conglomerate MCA/Universal Studios.

Individual concert tickets are $100, and group/corporate packages are available. For more information about tickets, contact: Barbara Washington Franklin, Executive Director, NCEED, P.O. Box 70617, Washington, D.C. 20024; 200-667-6444.

—Spend Easter with the Winans in Baltimore

(Continued from page 7)

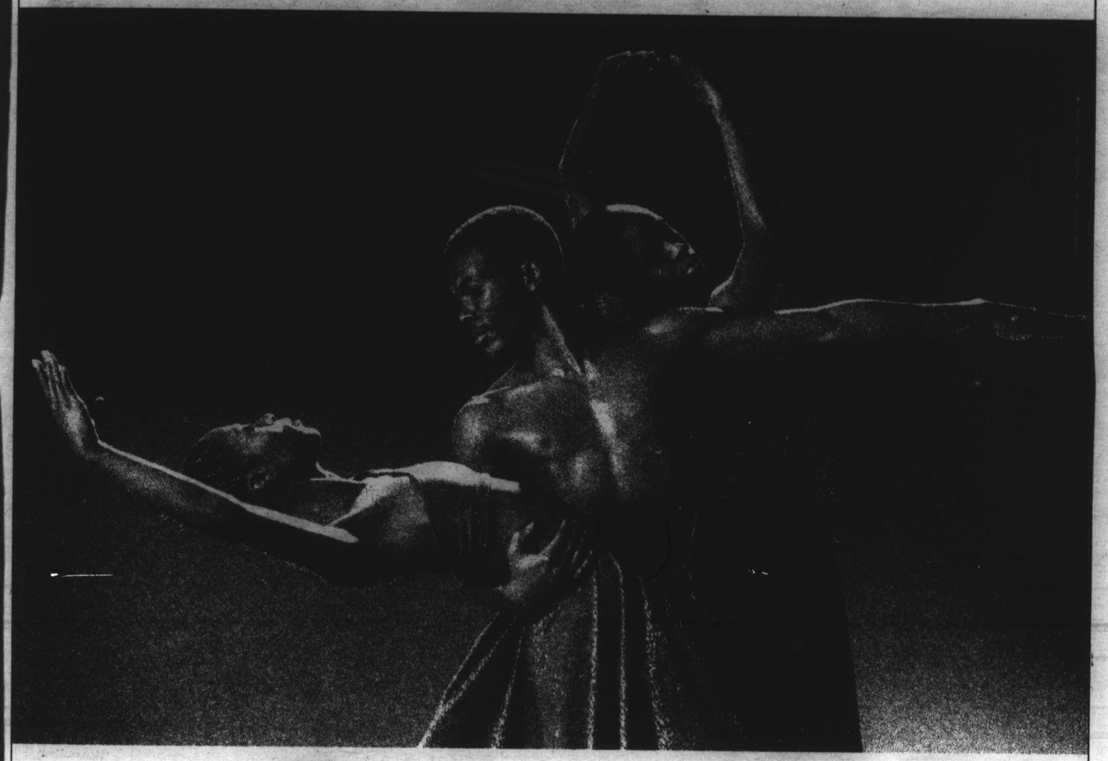
people just come to us with tapes and we accept them and listen to them and if we feel that something is definitely Winans or if we feel that it could be Winans then we would definitely consider it."

And they also offered this advice for young writers, "Just keep writing and store up a kind of library. And at the time that God determines, He'll open up the door when He feels that the time is right. And once He does, you'll be prepared. That is why you must keep writing."

And what can the people who come to the Baltimore Arena on Easter Sunday expect from the group responsible for such chart busting records as 1985's "Tomorrow" and the recent "Let My People Go?"

"We look to have a great time in the Lord," Winans said. "And we try to put on a concert that is . . . definitely spiritual and at the same time it's polished. And we believe in that. We carry a full band with us, crew members and sound people. We try to make it as A-1 and professional as possible. And we believe that in gospel music, when you're doing something for Christ it should be A-1."

Our good taste isn't just in our beer.



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