A Black man wrote Elvis' hits

By Ida Peters

Q. Please look up the name of the Black man who wrote most of Elvis Presley's greatest hits. I understand he used to make tapes and Elvis would copy his phrasing.

J. D.E. Charlotte, N.C.

A. The man behind Elvis Presley's greatest hits is Otis Blackwell, 56, of Brooklyn, N.Y. He wrote Elvis' "Don't Be Cruel" and received \$80,000 in royalties the first year. He also wrote "Return to Sender" and "All Shook Up" for him and "Great Balls of Fire" for Jerry Lee Lewis."

Q. I'm interested in Blanche Calloway, Cab's sister. Isn't she credited with giving Cab his start? Where were both of them born? Was she the first Black woman band leader? I've tried to check her facts; when did she die?

ANNIE POTTS
Baltimore, Md.

A. Blanche Calloway was born in 1902, in Baltimore, Md. and brother, Cab, was born in 1907 in Rochester, N.Y. although he spent most of his school years in · Baltimore. Blanche is credited with getting Cab started in Chicago. She attended Douglass High School and then Morgan State College. She left to appear in local clubs and revues. In 1928, she and Cab joined forces in Chicago and in 1930 she formed her own band and became the first Black woman to lead an all-male band. In 1941, she settled in Philadelphia, Pa. where she became a Democratic committeewoman. In 1953, she moved to Miami, Florida where she found Afram House, a cosmetic firm. She became the first Black woman to

vote in Miami in 1958. In 1956, she was the first Black woman disc jockey at Miami's radio station WFEC. In 1957, she moved to WMBM in Miami as Executive Director. She conducted a radio show until 1971 and died in 1978 at age 76.

Q. I came across some press clipping from the AFRO-AMERICAN for 1975 where you did some interviews with Eubie Blake. For my research, where did you meet him and what can you tell me that's not printed?

. . .

J. M. O. Annapolis, Md.

A. I always knew about Eubie Blake; he was an idol at the AFRO and he made Baltimore his second home. He always sent AFRO publisher Carl Murphy his original sheet music and I remember playing "Memories of You" in Junior High School, until it wore out. He was friendly with William Waller, AFRO Advertising Salesman and with Entertainment Editors E. B. Rae and Ralph Matthews in the 1930's and 1940's. I met him at a picnic in Glen Burnie at Ann and Bernard Lacewell's in 1975 when he came to rest at Lillie and Buster Myers' home in Morgan Park. They used to travel with Eubie. He was 92 then. In our conversation he talked that day about how he discovered Earl Fatha' Hines in Pittsburgh. We mentioned that Fatha was playing at the Annapolis Inn. My husband and I, Lillie and Buster took him to hear Hines and that night Eubie and Hines jammed

on stage together for more than one-half hour. I still have a letter from him saying how much he enjoyed the crab cakes and he remembered I had asked him for a picture of his hands. His handwriting was clear. This was before



Billy Dee Williams

his musical "Eubie." We talked regularly and visited him when he was in town. At his funeral, Earl Fatha Hines sent a telegram recalling how Eubie had discovered him.

Q. Is Billy Dee Williams launching a new perfume? I know that Elizabeth Taylor has a perfume called "Passion" and Cher has "Uninhibited." Is this a first for a Black male?

S. MOSLEY Detroit, Mich.

A. Yes it's a first! Billy Dee Williams is launching a new scent "Undeniable" for Avon. N.Y. based Royal Essence, a Black owned company has created the perfume which is a combination of Egyptian Jasmine, Moroccan Rose and imported Iris with Musk and exotic spices. Avon intends to market it in a bottle in the shape of the sexy lady.

All letters should be addressed to DAWN Magazine, 628 N. Eutaw St., Baltimore, Md. 21201. All questions are welcome, but while Dawn cannot provide individual answers, questions of general interest will be used in this column.

