



ENTERTAINMENT



BROADWAY BOUND REPORT

"Coming To America"



by Garland Lee Thompson

I just returned from New York, after attending some theatre, board meetings at the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop, a special press screening and cocktail reception for Eddie Murphy, who stars as "Prince Akeem," in Paramount Pictures, "Coming to America." "The best movie I've done as an actor," says Murphy, and he rates it better than "48 Hours," one of his earlier big box office successes. Murphy plays several roles in eye-bogglingly good make-up artistry. You will never recognize him in some cases without the closing visual credits. He's a Rick James-style soul singer, a barber, and a little old Jewish man in the barbershop, that is outrageous "color-blind" casting! This shows you what you can do if your films gross \$200 million and seventy million! Eddie Murphy is reported to be currently, Paramount's top money-maker and superstar.

I thoroughly enjoyed his hilarious press conference afterwards, with his "Black Pack" friend and co-star, Arsenio Hall, with Shari Headley, Friday, June 10th, at the New York Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts. The "Bubble Hill" (Murphy's code name for his East Coast estate) gang, better known as the "Black Pack," (includes Arsenio Hall and Robert Townsend of "Hollywood Shuffle," who is not in this film) is out to show us their new "stuff,"

"Coming to America." Hall also plays multi-roles as a barber, a transvestite, and a holy-roller black preacher, as well as Murphy's man-servant from their mythical African kingdom.

Mr. Murphy, who is recovering from a minor boating accident with overzealous fans in the Bahamas (where else), nevertheless, went into his "act" while fielding questions from a capacity audience of journalists, such as Abiola Sinclair of the New York Amsterdam News, Carl Offord, Publisher of the Black American, Florence Anthony of the New York Post, many major out-of-town (me from the Portland Observer) as well as press and media from fifteen foreign countries. Terrie Williams, Murphy's new press agent, of the Terrie Williams Agency, a black New York P.R. firm, did a good job of "hooking this party up, with the wine and goodies flowing!" Copper Cunningham, Former Essence cover girl and photographer and Juanita Coles, shooting for the Amsterdam News, were there, to tell us that it was "hot," an event of note! It was fun! You would have loved it too!

Arsenio Hall (recently of the Fox Network Late Night TV Show) and lovely Shari Headley, debuting in this new Paramount film, joined one of America's "hottest" of the new film stars in the making of "Coming to America."

Picture the idea of our "main man," Eddie Murphy as a wealthy young prince from a mythical African country, "Coming to America," accompanied by his royal aide, (Arsenio Hall) to "sow his wild oats" and with a secret desire to find his "true bride-to-be, who turn out to be "Lisa," played quite neatly by newcomer, Shari Headley.

They "get it together" nicely as Murphy, "the prince," finds his "black queen" living in Queens, New York (why not), until his royal father, the king of Zamunda (James Earl Jones), the queen (Madge Sinclair), shows up. And with his girl's father (John Amos), who desperately wants her to marry this "money," almost



'Prince' Eddie Murphy is "Coming To America," Seeking A Bride

"blews" the whole deal and relationship. Calvin Lockhart is Colonel Izzi, the father of the rejected Zamundan beauty, Imani (Vanessa Bell), who was trained from birth to be the perfect wife. Murphy says he wanted to do Africa beautiful, "usually you see people there in the woods with flies."

Quoting Ebony Magazine, "Surprisingly, there was very little difficulty in assembling such a cast—all of whom say they were attracted to the movie because they just wanted to work with Eddie." It's billed as a contemporary romantic comedy, as you will see in, "Coming to America." Its "Buppie down time" (black upward mobile person) with dynamite wardrobe for all you fashion freaks!

"Coming to America," a presentation of Gulf + Western's Paramount Pictures Corp., premieres nationally on Wednesday, June 29th, 1988. The new film is an Eddie Murphy Production of a Landis/Folsey Film that also stars James Earl Jones, John

Amos and Madge Sinclair. The director is John Landis ("Trading Places"), hand-picked by Murphy, but who had a "running-on-the-set" artistic battle with his star, but they still pulled it off okay. The screenplay is by David Sheffield and Barry W. Blaustein, from a story by Eddie Murphy and was produced by Robert D. Wachs and George Folsey Jr. Leslie Belzberg and Mark Lipsky are the executive producers.

The "Juice News" dept.: August Wilson's new Broadway play, "Joe Turner's Come And Gone," won the Drama Critics Circle Best Play Award for '87-'88 and one Tony out of six Tony nominations; Best Play, Best Director (Lloyd Richards), Best Featured Actor (Delroy Lindo), Best Supporting Actress (Kimberleigh Aarn, Kimberly Scott and L. Scott Caldwell, who to everybody's surprise, won it). This is the second year in a row, that a black actress and a friend of my, in a Wilson play has taken the Best Featured Actress category

(Mary Alice in "Fences," in '87).

This Wilson-Richards Writer/Director team duo is "hot" with both plays currently running on Broadway, a first for blacks playwrights in drama! Melvin Van Peebles ("Ain't Suppose To Die A Natural Death," "Don't Play Us Cheap") and Micki Grant ("Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope," and I can't remember her other one) did it as musicals. That's a good one

for all you theatre buffs to win two tickets to see Langston Hughes' "Simply Heavenly," opening August 18th, 1988, at the Lincoln Hall Theatre at Portland State University, starring Brenda Philips, Neal Thomas and Michael Holliday. Send entries to us at the "Broadway Bound Report," Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.



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FAMOUS FACES



Madge Sinclair



James Earl Jones

Sharon Mitchell, Co-Ancor Women — KGW — Channel 8

by Danny Bell

Sharon Mitchell is presently the morning co-anchor for KGW, Channel 8

Born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, she moved, at an early age, to Portland, Oregon with her mother and sister. She attended her last two years of high school at Jefferson High. It was while attending Jefferson that she became acquainted with and eventual friend of Wanda Nichols who was her English teacher. As Sharon later discovered Ms. Nichols served in the capacity as a drama instructor as well.

It was the interest generated by Ms. Nichols that led Ms. Mitchell to get involved in the Jefferson High School Annual Musical during her senior year. This experience changed her life and set the direction that eventually led to her present position at KGW.

It was during her senior year that she was encouraged to apply to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City, New York.



Sharon Mitchell

She was chosen as the sole recipient of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. This was significant because she competed with 200 other candidates nationwide.

Ms. Mitchell entered the academy with the intent of pursuing a career in Theatre and Music. She arrived in New York City to at-

tend the academy at 17, deriving financial support from her scholarship, student loan, and by working part-time at Burger King.

Shortly after graduating from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. She ran out of financial resources and elected to return to Portland.

Once again her former teacher, Ms. Nichols entered the picture when she learned Ms. Mitchell was working at J.C. Penney's. Ms. Nichols suggested that she apply for an opening at KPTV, Channel 12. KPTV ultimately hired her and Ms. Mitchell, began working as a receptionist. In her 4 years there she served in various capacities;

staff announcer, go-fer, assistant production aide and as a substitute weather person.

Upon conferring with various members of management, she came to the conclusion that without a degree there was little else to look forward too. Luckily it was

brought to her attention that there was an opening at KGW Radio, which she secured. This opportunity allowed her to get hands-on experience as a reporter and Newscaster.

Consequently after three years of working for KGW Radio, Ms. Mitchell moved to KGW TV and is presently working as the morning co-anchor with Nancy Francis, Monday through Friday.

I asked Ms. Mitchell for some insight into the African-American experience in regard to youth who would desire to pursue a career in journalism.

Her response was that from her personal perception is that people be hired on the consistency and quality of their work, rather than be influenced by racial overtones. Further more this type of attitudes should carry over into day-to-day contacts with others.

Ms. Mitchell demonstrates those qualities of perservice, and what a good attitude can do.

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