

# ENTERTAINMENT

## BEHIND THE SCENES

by Lisa Collins

**Arraignment Scheduled For Al B. Sure:** On March 22, Warner Bros Record's heartthrob Al B. Sure is scheduled to be arraigned on charges that he raped 23 year old Monique Edwards. Sure, (whose real name is Albert Brown) and his bodyguard, Solomon Miller were both arrested on February 26 and charged with rape. The pair were released after posting \$15,000 bail each, according to West Hollywood Sheriff's station officials. Edwards, a pre-med student, is the sister of actor Stoney Jackson, co-star of "The Insiders" and "the White Shadow". Jackson reportedly summoned the police when Edwards returned to his Los Angeles home "crying and half-dressed". An attorney for the 23-year old pre-med student, has said that aside from criminal charges, she will file a civil suit. A third party, Geffen recording artist, Chris Williams, was also named. (William's debut LP is slated for release this month). Meanwhile, Warner Bros has had no comment, referring all calls to Sure's Attorney. Hometown friends of Sure's in Mount Vernon, New York, are shocked. "There's no way--that's not Al at all," said one. "He's not violent. He's just not that kind of guy." On the other hand a source close to Edwards--Travis Clark, executive producer of "A Man Called Hawk", was outraged "Black women have been raped enough in this society. This is not about money, it's about integrity and principle. ...As it stands, it appears the court will determine what really happened that night. In a related incident, **Stoney Jackson reportedly went after Sure with a pipe**, during a performance at a Los Angeles Comedy Club. Jackson, who had to be restrained, had no comment. **Who's That Guy:** Amidst the controversy surrounding Madonna's so called blasphemous "Like A Prayer" video is an upcoming, black actor you're sure to be seeing a lot more of. Preferring to be known simply as "Leon", the 26-year old New York City native, portrays the black saint that Madonna kisses. Standing 6'3" Leon has stood out in films like "Colors" "The Flamingo Kid", and "All The Right Moves", and most recently ABC-TV's four-hour presentation of "The Women of Brewster Place". In it, he plays Robin Givens' lover and while Leon's been cast in all types of roles, it's his portrayal of lover to those like Madonna and Givens, that is sure to get the most mileage. During the filming of "Brewster's Place", Tyson and Givens were very mush together, with Tyson on the set every day, with the exception of the day of the scheduled love scene with Leon and Robin. "Fortunately for me it was the one day he wasn't there. I remember him telling me that he had been reading my role at home with her, and I replied to him, I just hope I do as well as you do with her, and we both laughed." **Sidney Poitier Honored:** The American Museum of the Moving Image recently honored Sidney Poitier with a black-tie gala in New York. The 62-year old actor-director was quoted as saying, "It does me good to know that there are people who feel that my work has encouraged them to do this....I rather like it. Because the bulk of my life and my work is certainly behind me." Speaking of Poitier, he was Warner Bros' first choice to portray the controversial **Principal Joe Clark** in "Lean On Me" but turned it down (reportedly telling the studio that he didn't believe in Clark's politics). Bill Cosby and Eddie Murphy were approached, but had other commitments. Danny Glover was also considered, but the film's writer fought for Freeman who'd won an academy award nomination for his work in "Street Smart" With the raves he is getting for his portrayal of Clark, Freeman may just win a second academy award nomination. **Short Takes:** Kim Field's current heartthrob is the eldest son of Rev. Jesse Jackson....and this columnist extends heartfelt sympathies to veteran actor Brock Peters on the passing of his wife, Didi, after a long bout with cancer....Next week As earlier promised, **El DeBarge** talks candidly about his career and the recent drug scandal that rocked his family.

## On The Money

**Sears Boosts Credit Line to Minority Banks:** Sears, Roebuck & Co. increased to \$30 million, its revolving line of credit with a syndicate of 60 minority-owned banks. The move demonstrates that small, minority owned banks can do business with major corporations. Alvin Boutte, CEO of black-owned Independence Bank of Chicago, the syndicate's lead bank, said "it also stimulates growth for minority banks and the minority communities that they serve."

**Griffey Denies Operating In Bad Faith:** A spokesman for Dick Griffey Productions had no comment on whether or not Griffey was still looking to sell SOLAR Records after negotiations with Motown fell through. Griffey, who denied in Billboard Magazine, charges that he had been operating during the negotiations in bad faith, said that a closer look at the contract, called for some adjustments--adjustments Motown wasn't willing to make. While, there was no comment on rumors that Griffey was having financial troubles or that he was shopping a deal with Capitol and CBS, Griffey is slated to make an announcements as well as tell his side of the story by the month's end.

**A Look at Flo Jo--America's Queen of Seoul as entrepreneur:** 29 year old Florence Griffith-Joyner, may be the fastest woman in the world, but she was the slowest to announce her post-Olympic game plan, due in part to the fact that she's had so many endorsement offers to sift through, and underwent a rigorous schedule of personal appearances. Her recent retirement from track and field came as no great surprise, and while Joyner has not entirely settled on all the endorsement offers she will take, first on the agenda is a Flo-Jo Doll, scheduled to make its debut later this year. Then there is the line of athletic sportswear and fashions, with her signature look reflective of the style--"high-cut legs and low-cut tops that give more movement."

**Essence Celebrates 20th Anniversary With Campaign Featuring Cover Model Search:** Essence will launch its latest campaign for readers with a cover model search, beginning May 8-13 in Los Angeles. Coordinators will visit malls in ten U.S. cities, including Detroit, Chicago, Jacksonville, and Charlotte, looking for the one woman who "embodies the Essence spirit." Ten semi-finalists will be chosen (all of whom will be featured in the magazine) and will vie at a final event to be held in New York City. The winner of this finale will appear on the cover of Essence's 20th Anniversary issue.

**Dockery Stretches Out In TV:** Now SI Communications, Inc., Bob Dockery's Syndicate--It Productions continues to branch out into TV projects in a big way, with three new programs on the launch pad, including "The Other Side of Victory"--an in-depth sports magazine format, hosted by Arthur Ashe; a two-hour primetime entertainment special documenting blacks in comedy and hosted by Tim Reid; and "Red, Hot, & Cool", --a half-hour, late night, music series, hosted by Nancy Wilson. It was in 1980, that Bob Dockery, became the first to open a syndication firm specializing in the development in black programming for radio,--urban contemporary formats. Today, his radio schedule includes over a dozen programs including the Jesse Jackson Commentary, which runs daily. In 1987, Dockery ventured into television. According to VP, Shirley Neal, while they are "trying to develop more general market programming, by no means are we trying to get out of radio."

## BROADWAY BOUND REPORT



by Garland Lee Thompson

### AN UPDATE ON RHYTHM & BLUE SINGER, RUTH BROWN

After reporting here in Broadway Bound Report, about singer, Ruth Brown, suffering a heart attack, several weeks ago, I am delighted to update the story with the news that she has recovered and is currently starring with Linda Hopkins and Carrie Smith, in the new Broadway musical, "Black And Blue," at the Minskoff Theatre in New York. "Write on, 'cause Ms. Brown is back in town!"

(A re-print of a article by Ted Mahar on Garland Lee Thompson, in The Oregonian, dated 15 years ago, Summer, 1974)

### PORTLAND LOSES OUT ON BROADWAY PLAY

For a few minutes last week, it seemed that the Broadway hit, "The River Niger," might play in Portland in August with most of the original cast, but it was not to be. The show did stop in Seattle (it was a local company), and its production stage manager, former Portlander, Garland (Lee) Thompson (correction: he stage managed the Broadway production in New York), tried to find a place for it in his home town, but he just couldn't.

"Civic Theater would have been ideal, and they were very agreeable, but they're committed to their SRO shows, and we would have had to play the worst theater nights of the week, Sunday through Tuesday," Thompson said.

"Lewis and Clark College was extremely helpful, and I hope we can work something out with them later, but for this show, they're too far away from Portland's black population center, and the transportation would have been a hassle (this was in 1974).

"Location is important for this show," Thompson said. "You don't want it in a ghetto where whites are scared to go, and you don't want it so far away blacks won't go. It's a black show, but not for exclusively black audiences" (a common misconception).

Thompson has been doing well since his last visit to The Oregonian (office) five years ago (actually 1968). The most spectacular success with which he's been associated has been "The River Niger" (Tony winner, 1973) for which he was production stage manager when it played at the Brooks Atkinson on Broadway, closing in February after 35 weeks in which it made \$618 under \$1 million. (& Pulitzer Prize play, "No Place To Be Somebody," '73)

He has supervised backstage activities in various capacities in New York and Los Angeles and on road tours in between. He has also worked with former Portlander Paul Winfield, whom he did not know when they were living here (as kids).

Winfield starred in one of Thompson's play, "Sisyphus and the Blue-Eyed Cyclops," 1970, at the Actors Studio in Los Angeles (a later winner of the 42nd Annual One-Act Play Festival in Washington, D.C., 1973) While most of Thompson's experiences have been

with black plays, including his own, he once stage managed a San Francisco production of the farce "Norman, Is That You?" (opened the show, left it in SF and it ran for months).

He has worked in New York with Joseph Papp (as a stage manager, '71), through whom he got the opportunity to direct another of his own plays ("Sisyphus"), with Al Freeman Jr. (and Adolf Caesar) starring. He has also worked with the Negro Ensemble Company (where they first staged "Sisyphus" in New York, produced by Michael Schultz at NEC), and is currently active in the Frank Silvera Writers Workshop (the founding director of and currently, president of the board), one of the activities of the non-profit Black Theater Alliance (under Joan Sandler, until the Workshop spun-off and moved uptown to Harlem).

Thompson has worked in college atmospheres and continues to do so (currently forming a new special 10 week course on "African American playwrights," Wed., March 27th, 6:20PM at PSU for the Black Studies Dept). In fact, he got to New York via a bus and truck tour of "No Place To Be Somebody," (it was actually the original National Tour back to Broadway, 1971) which he stage managed from New England to the Deep South (he really directed the southern tour and another national company 1972-73).

"The audiences were friendly in the South, Thompson said. "For one thing, we played mostly colleges campuses, and we had often been invited by the black student unions, but the audiences were always well mixed, and never had any trouble."

Thompson said he would like to see in Portland a situation which has helped him and other writers back East; The use of a college as a springboard for new talent (such as the PSU course).

"We read plays by young black and third world writers and try to find ways of getting them performed," Thompson said. Promising plays are taped by professional actors who donate their time, and the young playwrights are given constructive criticism by writers who have been successful (known playwrights coming to PSU).

"Hunter College has provided a place for Silvera Workshop plays to be performed (it was correctly readings at City College of New York and Princeton University's first Black Theatre Festival, 1974-75). One of my plays was performed there ("Sisyphus" at Princeton, and at City College, "Jesse And The Games, Jesse Owens, Olympiad," is 1984) and it was a great experience. I was sent there as an artist in residence so I could work with the student (a young black Princeton woman, Niamani Mutima, 1975) who was directing my play.

(Thanks to Ted Mahar, who was the theatre and film critic for The Oregonian in 1974.)

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## AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN'S READING GROUP PREPARE TO VIEW T.V. MOVIE "THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE" TOGETHER

Sunday, March 19 and Monday, March 20 on KATU-Channel 2, the public and a group of twelve AFRICAN-AMERICAN women in the Portland area, will share the lives of seven very different African-American women depicted in Gloria Naylor's award winning book, The Women of Brewster Place. The T.V. movie was produced by Oprah Winfrey, famous talk show host. Ms. Winfrey also stars as the lead female character whose role it is to be the common link between the women as they live through the joys and struggles of the African-American experience.

For the twelve women viewing it on T.V. together will be a symbolic reminder of the good feelings that they have had over the last two years since being a part of the group that meets every six weeks to discuss books that they have read and enjoyed. Chris Poole and Lessie Houston, co-founders of the reading group, state that the purpose of the group was to become more familiar with African-American female authors of the past and present. Naylor's book was the first book that was read by the group. Since February, 1986, the group of twelve women have read over sixteen books which have included such authors as Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God, J. California Cooper's Homemade Love, Shirley Anne Williams' Dessa Rose, Terry McMillans' MAMA, and Pulitzer Prize Winner, Toni Morrison's Beloved. Their current book is Proud Shoes: The Story of An American Family, by Pauli Murray.

The purpose has most definitely been met, but it has also provided a deeper sense of sisterhood among the women. The benefits of such a group includes: meeting new friends, honoring past African-American women, creating an atmosphere of openness to different opinions about life, and realizing that all our individual gifts and uniqueness helps us all to reach our full potential.

The group, which consists of Evelyn Minor-Lawrence, Clevonne Jackson, Renee Wilkerson-Anderson, Bernice MacRae, Antoinette Edwards, Audrey Haynes, Sharon White, Harriet Adair, Ora Hart, Donna Maxey-Pomerantz, Faye Williams-Bell, and Jean Stuart encourage other African-American women to get viewing parties together for this wonderful happening this weekend. Past original members who still provide support for the group; Jean Hartzog, Trish Ryan and Donna Kelly; will be with the group in spirit.

If anyone would like to read the book before Sunday's airing, a paperback edition can be purchased at B. Dalton Booksellers for \$3.95. Please enrich your life and watch it with your mother, daughter and other friends.

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