

ENTERTAINMENT

BROADWAY BOUND REPORT

Behind-The-Scenes

by Lisa Collins

by Garland Lee Thompson "DO THE RIGHT THING," AND SEE SPIKE LEE'S HOT NEW FILM!

Alright, movie fans, do yourself a favor, as actor, Ossie Davis (he plays "De Mayor" in the film), says "Do The Right Thing" and get off your "couch-potato-behind-the-tv-set" and go see Spike Lee's "cookin' & write on," new flick, "Do The Right Thing," while it's still in town!

It is currently playing at the Clinton Theatre in Portland. If you saw Spike Lee's two other powerful films, "she Gotta Have It" and "School Daze," you can call yourself a "together and dead-on-it-type" moviegoer, film aficionado, and will have something to tell your grand kids about. "Ya mon," just how "cool" you were in the a-end' of the eighties!

IN OTHER CITIES THEATREGOERS DID "THE RIGHT THING"

In New York, the Black press has been shouting about the fact that in spite of paragraphs of prior warnings from some white critics, Spike Lee's brilliant and thought-provoking new film, "Do The Right Thing," did not inspire instant street riots (some silly press people are so "tired" and behind the "Times").

The Universal Studio release, opened in New York and in other cities without an exchange of any "bad mouth" or dirty stars. In its initial three days out on 353 screens, its cash intake reached \$3.5 million. Universal Studio (and I know Ned Tannen years ago in Hollywood, 1967, who is now president of the Studio; is very pleased), the company

that put up the 46 million which insured the making of this outrageously advanced black film, announced that the field reports are that the film was a strong magnet in African-American, white and racially mixed neighborhoods.

In three days on some 49 screens in "the Big Apple" territory, its cash flow averaged \$13,714 per theatre (now that's serious money for a black film of the un-Hollywood-type). This is mind-blowing music to Ned Tannen Universal's financial ear (I only wish a company from our community was doing it and counting the money). It insures the landmark new film and its hot young actor/director/producer and his team of young moviemakers, big success in a "cold-blooded" American film industry and distribution market.

Howsoever, people like New York columnist, Joe Klein's "write" hand really got caught out on a bias limb. He is quoted in his column: "the film is irresponsible and could ignite violence and could lead to (check this out) the defeat of New York mayoral candidate, the current black NY Borough president of Manhattan, my old friend, David Dinkins. Well, eat ya heart out, Joe, because it didn't cause any rioting, just lines of interested black, Hispanic, white, young and old moviegoers. And now David Dinkins is mayor of New York, Doug Wilder is Governor-elect of Virginia, Mr. Rice is mayor-elect of Seattle and New Haven, Conn. has a new black mayor! Poor Joe, how wrong can you be and stay in the newspaper business!

In "Do The Right Thing," Spike Lee

clearly outlines a fairly broad panorama of the pathology of African-American people and gives us some insight into the European (Italian-American) psychic, as it pertains to their working among black neighborhoods. "Sal's Famous Pizzeria is one of the most vibrant businesses in the community. We also see a Korean couple operate a vegetable & fruit stand, which is very true-to-life in New York today. It points out the economical slavery as a serious problem in the African-American community. A Puerto Rican brother has a homemade mobile ices stand just like it is throughout the city, but not a single black business is featured or appears to exist. Lee does not glorify the sickness of the '70s. He just "lays it out there for us to observe (dig it!)."

The "Greek chorus" (a group of character actors commenting on the major action) of the movie, displays a line of "brothers," broken and disillusioned, like I have seen for years in Harlem, Brooklyn and all over New York. The older brothers, such as "De Mayor," played by my dear friend Ossie Davis, is a near-homeless old wino-head, but his is "rich" in character, like "the old black man" in the famous film, Black Orpheus. "Other older men, who should represent wisdom and a foundation for the community, sit on the corner, just as we have seen for years, talking "crap" and "BS," about women and feeling-literally their penises, the only part of their manhood that has not been "ripped off!" Hollywood could never have made this film. So I know why "the french cinema crowd" at the Cannes Film Festival had their

minds "blown away" by this important black film statement of African-American art, rhythm and form. Like jazz, it is unique and indigenous in its total scope.

When a young black brother called, "Buggin Out," (a fine young actor who has worked with Spike Lee in "School Daze," and he has worked at the NY Negro Ensemble Company, Juancarlos Espinosa), complains that "Sal, the Italian owner pizza parlor," doesn't have any of African heroes on his all-Italian "Wall of Fame." "Buggin Out" "freaks out," and threatens to lead a boycott against the place. He becomes the militant in the movie. He is the catalyst for the anger and the need to self-actualization in the frustration of the black community, but is not to be taken seriously because by his very name, he's a psycho, someone to be held up to ridicule, until the fateful moment of truth when the "real deal goes down" in the climax of the film. I'll let you go see it to dig this heavy piece of business of Spike's film. Write on.

In the absence of strong role models, the young brothers, like the character, "Radio Raheem," hides from reality by blasting their "ghetto boxes," as we have all seen and heard in our black communities from one end of this country to the other. A major point in the film is that the filmmaker plays a major role, "Mookie," the pizza delivery man at the pizza shop, and the pathology of the black community is thoroughly seen when "Sal, the white owner," makes passes at "Mookie's" sister. This can be seen as a metaphor for the famous "Tawana Brawley case" (The young black girl, who accused a group of white men of raping her in upstate New York). There are so many other little subtle shadings and "colors" in this piece of fresh new work that I just have to say, "Do The Right Thing," check it out! Write on, Spike Lee and your "Forty Acres and a Mule" Company. (Plays the Cinema 21, Dec. 5 & 6, 1989)

Update: See "Making Do The Right Thing," by St. Clair Bourne & Spike Lee's first film, "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barber Shop, We Cut Heads, at the Cinema 21, Dec. 3 & 4, 1989, Sunday & Monday.)

Youssou N'Dour Expresses is Polyrhythmic Sounds

Youssou N'Dour has emerged as an essential figure in pan-cultural world music. His breathtaking voice and innovative, bluesy style have captivated audiences around the globe, most recently during Amnesty International's wildly successful "Human Rights Now!" tour. Now, Youssou takes another step into the future with "The Lion," his brilliant new Virgin album featuring "Shakin' the Tree," a duet with Peter Gabriel.

Youssou N'Dour (pronounced YOU-sue en-DURE)--who turns thirty this year--is by far the most popular musical star in Senegal, Africa, his native land. He was born into a very musical family--his mother was a "griot," or an esteemed traditional singer/storyteller. From his early teens, Youssou performed in public at various religious and social ceremonies, where music functioned not only as entertainment, but as a powerful force of unity and history, too.

In 1976, Youssou was performing in Dakar's hottest nightclubs with the city's premiere band, the Star Band. Inspired by traditional African (and, specifically, Senegalese) music--as well as Cuban and American popular music--Youssou and the Star Band attained great popularity quickly, but, Youssou felt he needed to step out on his own. He invited six members of the Star Band with him, and, recruiting six other musicians, he formed the Etoile de Dakar, which matured into today's Super Etoile de Dakar.

With Super Etoile de Dakar, Youssou has vaulted to international stardom and acclaim, first building up a very loyal following in Senegal, then reaching beyond to the rest of Africa, Europe, North America, and even Asia. Interestingly, Youssou has just recorded a number of songs with Japanese superstar Ryuichi Sakamoto for his Virgin debut album, which is tentatively set for release this Fall.

It was during Youssou's first trip to Paris that he was struck by the number of his fellow Africans who had immigrated from their homeland. This inspired the song "Immigres," the title track from the album which was originally released in Europe in 1984. Virgin's Earthworks label issued "Immigres" last Fall here in the United States.



Youssou N'Dour

Youssou's worldwide success can be attributed to a number of factors--not the least of which is his incredible voice, a soaring, celebratory instrument that touches any audience, regardless of the fact that Youssou most often sings in his native language, Wolof. That Youssou and the Super Etoile de Dakar have almost singlehandedly developed their own distinctive music style--the bluesy, polyrhythmic sound known as "mbalax"--has also brought attention their way. One cannot discount the singer and his band's riveting live performances, either--shows that have "an overriding spirit of exultation" as Newsday recently wrote.

In addition to working with Acogny and David Sancious, Youssou also recorded one song--"Shakin' the Tree"--with Peter Gabriel

for "The Lion." Gabriel has been a longtime friend and supporter of Youssou's. Youssou sang on Gabriel's "So" album (the song "In Your Eyes"), and opened Gabriel's concerts throughout the world during his "So" tour. Also, Gabriel and N'Dour were together throughout last year's Amnesty International "Human Rights Now!" tour along with Bruce Springsteen, Tracy Chapman, and Sting. "When N'Dour broke into one of his trademark wails, the effect was simply magnificent," wrote Rolling Stone of his performance at Wembley Stadium during last year's Amnesty International tour. With "The Lion," the magnificence continues--Youssou's is a roar that will be heard around the world.

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