

# Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

The Portland Observer



## AROUND ABOUT TOWN

The Hilton Hotel was the recent gathering place of friends and business associates of the First Friday group. The hotel was decorated with beautiful Christmas trees with gold angels throughout the ballroom. Sonja Stallings, Ann Pruitt, Rolanda Gaines and Manfred White, the group's founding members, are credited with starting the marketing network which also serves as a base for recruiting new members and potential candidates for career opportunities.

The icy and blizzardily cold weather did not alter or dampen the spirit of the partygoers as they had the look of holiday wear, the color of jewel tones and black dominated the fashion scene. The holiday event's buffet was awesome with a connoisseur's touch of savory and tasty appetizing food. Seen chatting with Tony Hopson were Nike's Cheryl Nickerson and Elizabeth Waters, organizers and corporate sponsors of the event. The First Friday concept began simply as a means to network with newcomers on an economic and social level,

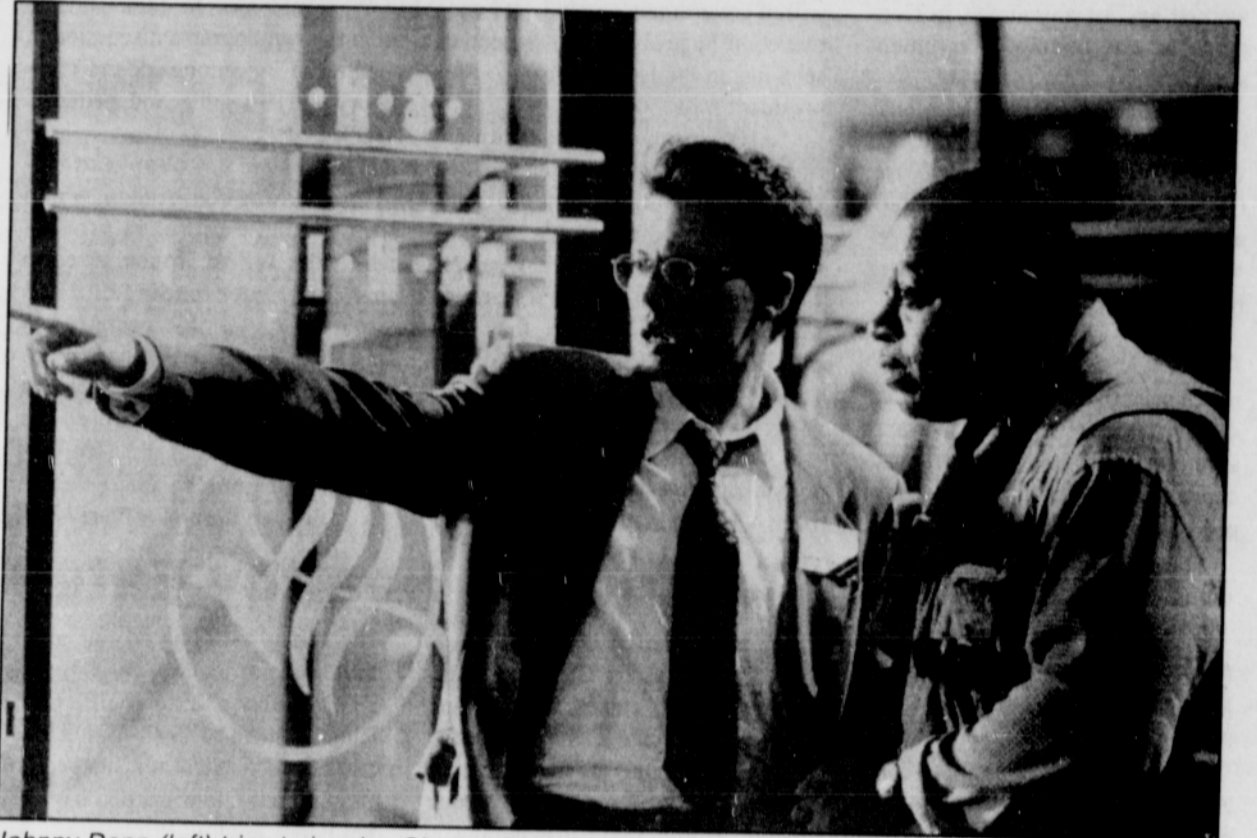
building relationships and sharing information as being the primary focus. On this night, many of the guests had relocated from the Portland Observer's 25th Anniversary celebration party as did Kirk Green's band. Green roved through the audience singing with ease, teasing and flirting with everyone dancing. Also seen were Connie and Robert Romanowski, and Jimmy and Jean Walker to name a few. Richard A. Simeon, former computer store owner turned artist, showcased abstract oils and sensuous sculptures. "Organic Realism" is the term Simeon used to describe his art. An outstanding piece featured his personal "Self Portrait." His publicist, Janice Gillespie, was in network city, looking stunning in a strapless, short and multicolored dress. Leon Harris from Seattle, who earlier that evening received an award from the Portland Observer for business and community service, was



By Cora Smith

seen everywhere sharing handshakes and hugs of congratulations. Harris, a former managing editor of the newspaper, was accompanied by his friend Don Williams.

The First Friday gathering drew about 300 paying guests, with proceeds to benefit The Children's Charity Fund. The designated recipient award will be Self Enhancement Inc., Actor/vocalist Mario Depriest, "Mr. Public Relations," was there, as well as Pam and Maurice Lucas who had a great time. However, travelling home was a perilous experience, as the Lucas' and others became stranded on the black icy freeways for several hours. Others not braving the risky drive, took shelter at the beautiful Hilton Hotel. The First Friday group is to be commended for promoting business entrepreneurs and for advancing the diversity of the internet of communications "Around About Town."



Johnny Depp (left) tries to involve Charles Dutton in derailing an assassination plot in "Nick of Time." In the suspense thriller which recently opened in theaters, Depp is ordered to kill an innocent public figure at a political rally or his own daughter will die. The motion picture also stars Christopher Walken.

## Author Rosa Guy: Poised And Ready For Success

Rosa Guy is one of America's best kept literary secrets. However, with the pending release of her newest novel from Dutton Press, *The Sun, The Sea, A Touch of the Wind*, this award winning author and co-founder of the Harlem Writer's Guild, is ready to assume her rightful place as one of this country's most important African-American Writers.

In *The Sun, The Sea, A Touch of the Wind*, Guy writes of a Black woman struggling against her oppression with the insight and uncompromising dignity that has become her hallmark. Her newest heroine, Jonnie Dash, provides the right mix of contempt and strength of purpose as she struggles for acceptance and purpose in an environment she both despises and loves. Set against the lush tropical backdrop of Haiti, Guy paints a multi-layered landscape of colorful, robust characters that pull the reader into their web of deceit, love and lustful urges. The layers are then systematically removed to reveal lives corrupted by self-indulgence and trickery, only to be redeemed by the innocence and purity of youth.

Rosa Guy's novels have explored the stifling consequences of poverty in settings as far away as the Caribbean, or as near as New York's Harlem for over 30 years. Once it is published, *The Sun, The Sea, A Touch of the Wind* will join an impressive body of literary material authored by Ms. Guy that includes *Bird At My Window; A Measure of Time; And Then She Heard A Bird Sing; Edith Jackson; Ruby; Children of the longing; and Music of Sum-*



Rosa Guy

was first published in 1972, it has never been out of print! The *Friends* has been on the British syllabus for the past fifteen years, making Guy the first Black woman writer so honored. Now listed as a modern classic in England, this sensitive, moving story of two Black girls from different economic backgrounds growing up in Harlem, continues to find new audiences around the world.

Rosa Guy's personal life odyssey has been a major influence on the scope and tone of her writing. Upon arriving in the United States with her parents in the early 1930's and moving to Harlem at the age of eight, Rosa became a prolific observer of African-American culture and the forces that shape its existence in American society. As a result, classism, poverty and the sins that accompany its reality are the subject of her novels.

"Poverty is a sin. It's really not necessary. There is no need for it anywhere in the world. I'm opposed to poverty, and I'm committed to writing against it," states Guy. With these beliefs, it is only natural that she would write of men, women and children who struggle to define their place in a society that often ignores or maligns their presence. Yet, through it all, her main characters somehow emerge more victorious and noble than when we first meet them.

*The Sun, The Sea, A Touch of the Wind* is sure to add to Rosa Guy's legacy. "I'm one of America's best kept secrets," she says, "and I think my time has come!"



## 007's Cool Is Back

**GoldenEye:** Famke Janssen (right) is Xenia Onatopp a mysterious and dangerously seductive past-Soviet assassin in *Untied Artists'* explosive action-adventure "GoldenEye."



Russian Mafia who want to zap the Digital Age back to the Stone Age. Also, this Bond's sexual appetite is on a diet reflective of the safe sex decade as he beds only one-Natalya (Izabella Scorupco) a systems programmer who survives the first explosive demonstration of GoldenEye's power.

As the world gets smaller I was surprised that the cast and characters were all lilly-white and the tone of the film reminds me

of a time when the sun never set on the British Empire. If you are looking for James Bond to come back with a bang you will find it in *GoldenEye*. However, if you are looking for a James Bond film which is reflective of today's society, that James Bond film has yet to be produced.

(Lanita Duke is Owner/Producer of Grassroot News, a video production company).

## QUINCY JONES

**Musician, Composer, Producer, Arranger, Conductor**

An impresario in the broadest and most creative sense of the word, Quincy Jones, in the course of his career, has encompassed the roles of composer, record producer, artist, film producer, arranger, conductor, instrumentalist, TV producer, record company executive, magazine founder and multi-media entrepreneur. As a master inventor of musical hybrids, he has shuffled pop, soul, hip-hop, jazz, classical, African and Brazilian music into many dazzling fusions, traversing virtually every medium, including live performance, records, movies and television. It's a creative cornucopia brilliantly brought together on his new Qwest Records release, *Q's Jook Joint*.

Quincy Jones was born on March 14, 1933, in Chicago and brought up in Seattle. While in elementary school, he began studying trumpet and sang in a gospel quartet at age 12. His musical studies continued at the prestigious Berklee College of Music in Boston, where he remained until the opportunity arose to tour with Lionel Hampton's band as a trumpeter, arranger and sometime-pianist. He moved on to New York and the musical "big leagues" in 1951, where his reputation as an arranger grew. By the mid-50's, he was arranging and recording for such diverse artists as Sarah Vaughan, Ray Charles, Count Basie, Duck Ellington, Big Maybelle, Dinah Washington, Cannonball Adderley and LaVern Baker.

Quincy's creative magic has spanned over four decades, beginning with the music of the post-swing era and continuing through today's high-technology, international multi-media hybrids. In the mid-50's, he was the first popular conductor-arranger to record with the Fender bass. His theme from the hit TV series

*Inside* was the first synthesizer-based pop theme song. As the first black composer to be embraced by the Hollywood establishment in the 60's he helped refresh movie music and badly needed infusions of jazz and soul.

His landmark 1989 album, *Back On The Block*-named "Album Of The Year" at the 1990 Grammy awards-created the first fusion of the bebop and hip-hop musical traditions. And as producer of the historic "We Are The World" recording (the best-selling single of all time) and Michael Jackson's multi-platinum solo albums (*Off The Wall, Bad and Thriller* the latter being the best selling album of all time with over 40 million copies sold), Quincy Jones stands as one of the most successful and admired creative artist/executives in the entertainment world.

*Q's Jook Joint* is the latest triumph in the career of an artist and impresario whose ability to touch people's mind and spirit is the stuff of legend.

## The Cast For The Upcoming "Grease!"

The official Broadway production of the '50s rock 'n' roll sensation continues its successful national tour with a January 16-21 run in Portland's Civic Auditorium.

It'll be time to rock 'n' roll -- '50s style -- when the brand-new Tommy Tune production of the musical hit, *Grease!*, opens in the Civic Auditorium January 16 for a one-week, eight-performance run.

*Grease!* stars Debbie Gibson as the tough but vulnerable Rizzo, Adrian Zmed (R.J. Hooker) as the super cool Danny Zuko, and Sally Struthers as the ever lovin' English teacher, Miss Lynch.

*Grease!*, one of Broadway's longest running musicals, takes a hilarious, tuneful and loving look at what it was like growing up in the super-cool '50s with the funniest gang of high school students you'll ever meet. Taking place in a time when hot-rod-living boys in black-leather jackets wore greasy coifs and boy crazy girls wore beehive hairdos,

white bobby socks and skin-tight pedal-pushers, *Grease!* is complete with drive-in passion pits, sock hops, pajama parties, hubcap stealing and sneaking ciggie-butt at the senior prom.

*Grease!* is the story of Danny Zuko, king of the Burger Palace Boys, and Sandy Dumbrowski, the wholesome, naive and pretty transfer student whose life changes forever thanks to the influence of the tough yet vulnerable Rizzo, leader of the Pink Ladies gang.

With an exciting recreation of such popular '50s dances as the Stroll, the Slop, the Hully-Gully and the Hand-Jive, no wonder the New York Daily News called *Grease!* "the dancingest Broadway musical in town." *Grease!* also has one of Broadway's most tuneful scores featuring such hilarious '50s parodies as: "It's Raining on Prom Night," "Beauty School Dropout," "All Alone at the Drive-In Movie," plus a dozen others.

The book, music and lyrics for *Grease!* were written by Warren Casey and Jim Jacobs. The original Broadway production opened June 7, 1972 at the Broadhurst Theatre and ran for eight years, becoming Broadway's longest running musical at that time, and is currently the sixth-longest running musical of all time.

This new production is directed and choreographed by Jeff Calhoun. Mr. Calhoun recently staged *Tommy Tune Tonight!* for Broadway as well as serving as Associate Choreographer on the Tony Award winning musical, *The Will Rogers Follies*. The lavish sets are designed by John Arnone; the costumes are by Willa Kin; and lighting by Howell Binkley.

Produced by Tony Award winners, Barry and Fran Weissler, *Grease!* is "a delightful potpourri of memorabilia, funky '50s sounds, exaggerated movement and 'cool and tough' dialogue...a fascinating romp," so says '50s rock 'n' roll guru and TV personality Dick Clark.