

# 'Soul Food' Serves up Last Episode

*Departure leaves no black dramas on television*

The fifth and final season of television's longest-running black drama, Showtime's "Soul Food," has served up its last episode, leaving behind an uncertain future for the genre.

Based on the 1997 hit film of the same name, the multigenerational saga of one Chicago family has been one of Showtime's most popular series, making stars out of Vanessa Williams (not the former Miss America), Nicole Ari Parker and others.

Fans held "Soul Food" viewing parties and the show's official Web site amassed over 10,000 hits daily. But after last week's finale there is no significant black dramas left on the air.

Showtime decided it was best "to go out on top with high ratings and high-quality storytelling," said series executive producer Tracey Edmonds, although increasing production costs might have been a factor.

Yet Edmonds said the story line will be left "open-ended enough" so that another network

The cast of Showtime's 'Soul Food.' The NAACP Image award-winning series bought African American reality to television.



could revive the series if it wanted to.

"This show speaks to its audience on a personal level, especially in the African-American culture. That's because we have African-Americans writing for these characters, African-Americans directing episodes, reflecting their true lives and lifestyles."

While it never came close to being as big a cable deal as something like "The Sopranos," the NAACP Image award-winning series marked a turning point, said Ron Simon, curator for the Museum of Television and Radio in New York.

"Soul Food represents the beginning steps of trying to answer

the question: How do you deal with the new African-American reality on television?" he said. "It's not dealing with stereotypes and the way (white people) think things are. It just shows the great potential of African-American drama on television."

Rochell Thomas, an associate editor at TV Guide, "Soul Food"

deserves more credit from those who've dismissed it as a mere movie spin-off.

"The fact that it worked is what matters," said Thomas, adding, "in general, dramas are having a hard time right now if they aren't law or cop shows. It's just that no one is willing to give a black drama a chance."

The reality of network television is that it is driven more by profits than social consciousness, so unless an "ethnic" show has crossover appeal to a wider audience, it will never achieve true hit status.

"You have to appeal to blacks and whites in the audience," said

historian Tim Brooks, "and the black audience isn't big enough if whites won't watch, too. Whites certainly will watch black shows if they don't feel excluded by it."

Dee LaDuke, author of "Making Great Television," noted that white shows have become part of the "normal TV viewing experience" for black viewers, "but white people don't themselves make (black shows) a first choice. Convincing the broadcast networks that these lives are as rich and sexy, tragic and funny as any that have succeeded on television ... is the next step for the reflection of race on television."

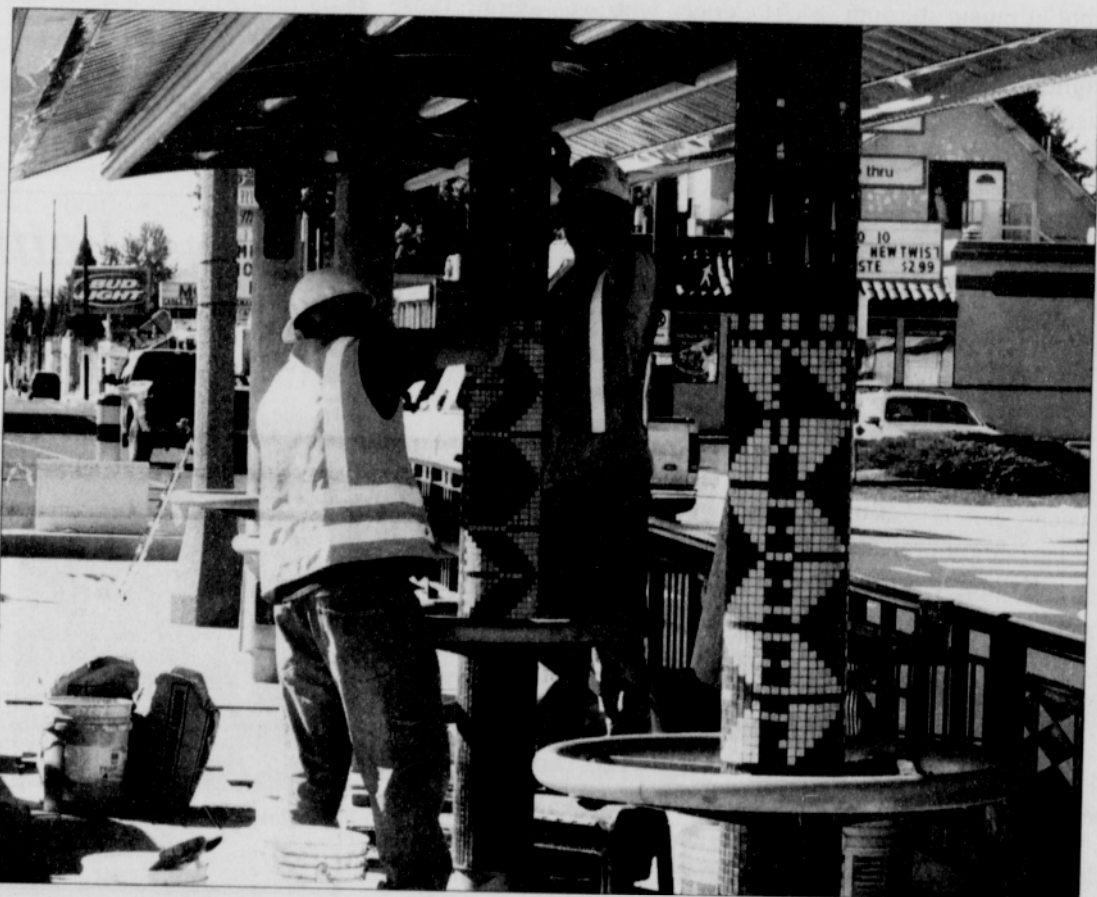
## Max Tour to Feature Line's Artists

The public is invited to meet the Interstate MAX artists and take a tour of station art along the Interstate MAX Yellow Line on Thursday evening, June 10.

The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with a reception at the Expo Center Station and brief introduction to the artwork. At 6:30 p.m., participants will board a MAX train and the tour begins; ending at the Expo Center at 8:40 p.m.

Artists will describe the artwork at their station during the tour. The tour will stop at every other station heading southbound on the Interstate MAX and the remaining half of the stations will be visited on the northbound return trip to the Expo Center. Attendees who can't stay for the entire tour may leave at any time.

Each of the 10 stations reflects the rich history of the community including the Japanese American internment at what is now the Expo Center, the thriving African-American music scene in Albina, the flooding of the city of Vanport, the cattle industry in Kenton, and multicultural heritages from Africa, South America, India, and Poland.



Local artists created tiles with an Afro-centric flair at the North Killingsworth Street Interstate light-rail station. Artwork that reflects the rich multicultural histories of the community is reflected at each station along the new line.

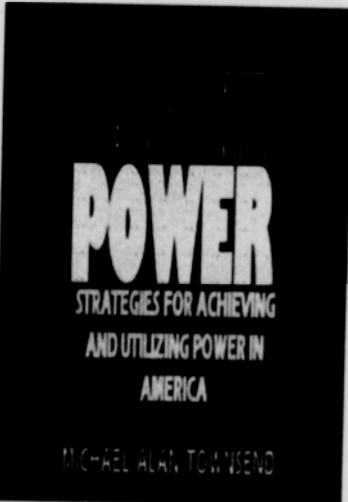
## Author Offers Success Strategies

Recent research has shown that African-American males start falling behind in kindergarten. If we add to this the fact that there are more African-American males incarcerated than in college, two questions beg for answers. First, why is this allowed to go on, and who benefits?

"We know that education benefits the society," said author Michael Alan Townsend.

In his book, "Black Power: Strategies for Achieving and Utilizing Power in America," Townsend examines these issues.

"In New York State alone there



are at least 60,000 African Americans incarcerated or on parole. None of these individuals currently has the right to vote. The beneficiaries of such a policy are definitely not the people in the communities where these felons come from," he said.

Townsend offers many strategies detailed in his book, which is available at the publisher's Web site, www.bronxvillage.com for \$9.95.

## Fresh, Affordable Produce on Alberta Cooperative announces summer season

Recognizing the need to provide healthy, affordable, high quality food to north and northeast Portland neighborhoods, the Alberta Cooperative Grocery, 1500 N.E. Alberta St., is excited to announce a new summer season of the Alberta Farmers Market.

The cooperative will offer seasonal produce from local growers, ready-to-eat food and weekly entertainment. Farmers Markets, which are held Sundays, begin on June 6 through Sept. 26 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The goal of the Alberta Farmers Market is to serve diverse communities and provide a space for area residents to connect with local food producers.

Musical guest Schicky Gnarowitz will kick off the Alberta Farmers Market's eclectic weekly music schedule with an upbeat, fun klezmer music.

For more information, volunteer opportunities or vendor booths contact 503-287-4333.

## Terrorism Concerns Cancels Show

(AP) — Hip-hop star Missy Elliott canceled a planned concert in Jakarta, Indonesia after the U.S. Embassy warned Americans about potential terrorist attacks in the country.

Elliott had been scheduled to perform last Wednesday as part of an international tour.

"We apologize to all the fans of Missy Elliott because of this cancellation," Roberto of Lunar Entertainment, the show's promoter, said.

The U.S. Embassy issued a statement reminding U.S. citizens to remain aware of the "continued potential for terrorist attacks



Missy Elliott

against Americans or American interests in Indonesia and worldwide."

"A convergence of local and international factors has increased the potential threat," the embassy said.

## Inner-City Rap Movie Coming

(AP) — Filming is scheduled to begin July 10 on an inner-city rap movie produced by John Singleton and directed by filmmaker Craig Brewer.

"Hustle & Flow," starring Terrence Howard ("Big Momma's House"),

Anthony Anderson ("Barbershop") and hip-hop artist Ludacris, will be shot over a four-week pe-



John Singleton

riod.

Brewer has described the \$2.8 million independent production as the story of a "pimp-hustler with a mid-life crisis who wants to rap."

Singleton was nominated for a best-director Oscar for 1991's "Boyz n the Hood." His films also include "Poetic Justice" and 2000's "Shaft."

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