

Songs

from page C7

hottest recording artists, he's also contributing music to blockbuster motion pictures at the same time.

In the last year, Elliott has produced, written and/or remixed songs for Destiny's Child, Pink, Mya, and Kylie Minogue as well as solo material for all three members of Destiny's Child. He's also helping to shake movie theaters with his music for "Scooby-Doo," "Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery" and "Down to Earth." Recently Elliott was recruited to serve as music supervisor and composer for the live-action "Fat Albert" feature, which is based on the famed cartoon series.

While his mom is best known for singing the gentle ballads of Bacharach & David and his father was a jazz drummer, Elliott's own musical signature is more aggressive, made up chiefly of funky beats and vibrant melodies. He's incredibly musical and diverse.

In recent years, Elliott has joined forces with a wide array of stellar artists, including Green Day, Eminem, Bone Thugs-N-Harmony, Keith

Sweat, Barry White and Ziggy Marley.

But it is his work with female vocalists that has him on the fast track. Elliott co-wrote and produced four songs for Pink's multiplatinum album, "Missundaztood," including the title cut. He was tapped to produce one of Beyonce Knowles' songs ("Hey Goldmember") and remix the first single ("Work It Out") for the third installment of the "Austin Powers" film franchise. For the "Scooby-Doo" soundtrack, Elliott wrote and produced "Thinkin' Bout You" for Beyonce's younger sister, Solange Knowles, which features Murphy Lee of St. Lunatics. Elliott co-produced Mya's vocals on the Grammy-winning remake of "Lady Marmalade" for the "Moulin Rouge" soundtrack and wrote and produced a half-dozen selections for Mya's next album. As a remixer, Elliott retooled Minogue's international smash, "Love at First Sight."

"Not exactly sure how I ended up working with all these incredible women, but I don't think too many guys would complain," said Elliott with a chuckle. But in his Burbank-based recording studio,

Elliott is all business. Tall and burly, he's a dynamic ball of energy, committed and passionate about his art. "Whether it's making music for an artist for an album or hooking up with a director for a film, it's about the challenge of coming up with something fresh, something that really captures the personality of the artist or the movie. That's what excites me and keeps me up all night in the studio."

Staying up all night in the studio is exactly what Elliott will be doing for a while. He has new record projects coming soon from Mya, Solange Knowles, Dream and solo material from Kelly Rowland and Beyonce Knowles of Destiny's Child, in addition to newcomers Hot Karl and Alley Life (Interscope), Natasha (Universal), Yasmee (MCA) and LovHer (Def Jam).

Aside from commencing work on "Fat Albert," Elliott is slated to create the title track for the motion picture "Fighting Temptations" to be sung by Beyonce Knowles, as well as music for the films "Masters of Disguise," "Suckaz" (starring Jamie Kennedy), "Papi Chulo" (produced by Forest Whitaker) and "Lil' Pimp," based on the popular Internet character.

Center working with young actors

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Some local at-risk teenagers are enduring the dog days of summer in the fashion of a Broadway production, as writers and producers of a play about their lives that includes drama, comedy, film, music and dance.

Through a creative initiative, sponsored by Winston-Salem State University's Center for Community Safety and several other community agencies and arts groups, these teens are provided an outlet for directing their energy away from mischievous behavior.

The results of their outlet will be a series of live performances titled "Celebrate Home and Hood," scheduled to open to the public July 25, 26 and 27 at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) in Winston-Salem. The goal is to help these youths develop their skills in creative writing, audiovisual technology, performance art, and marketing through an intensive art curriculum known as the Summer Film and Arts Institute.

These youths are regarded



These teens - identified as "at-risk" because they are living in an environment where violence is identified as learned from peers and families, and is often felt to be a survival behavior - are writing and producing a play about their lives. The play, "Celebrate Home and Hood," will be performed July 25-27 at SECCA.

as "at-risk" because they are living in an environment where violence is identified as learned from peers and families, and is often felt to be a survival behavior. The institute provides a stipend for these youths, aged 13 to 17 years old, who have been the focus of citywide violence-prevention efforts.

"This is an excellent opportunity for this youth population

to explore productive alternatives to the lives they are living and learn skills that may help them discover a way out," said Lynn Rhoades, the project coordinator for WSSU's Center for Community Safety.

The five-week institute, which began June 24 and will run through July 27, is a collaboration of Winston-Salem State

See Center on C9

Mosley

from page C7

Leroy Mosley died in 1993. Bits of his father's life show up in his son's fiction.

Mosley has heard a lot of stories about what it means to need an open door. Like Easy, Mosley's own father became an orphan about age 9 and then "a wild boy riding the rails." And like another Mosley character, Paris Minton in Mosley's book "Fearless Jones," Mosley's father was born in New Iberia, La., about an hour from the infamous Angola Prison.

But as much as Leroy Mosley told his son about growing up in the South, he never talked about riding the rails, Walter Mosley said. "He never told me about the inside of one box car. And toward the end of his life, when I asked him about it, he'd just cry."

And although Mosley has been to Louisiana "a lot," he's never been to New Iberia. "It took so many years for my father to go back to the South. He was so afraid of it. It was so painful to him, his history, that I've absorbed a lot of it."

Being black in America is a huge component of all of Mosley's work. For starters, Easy,

almost always describes people by their skin color: "eggshell brown," "golden brown," "ochre colored," "dusky bronze," "muddy brown."

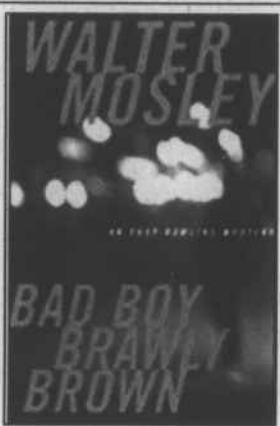
Mosley says it's very deliberate. "It's a whole different thing when you're colored in America," he said, emphasizing the word colored. "You're race conscious. ... Once, you're a victim and you live in it, then you live by it."

Mosley also tries to be faithful to the way people talk and has been praised often for his dialogue. Some of his characters use the N-word, and since there's been much discussion about the word, would Mosley think at sometime in the future of having a character make a point about not wanting to use the word?

Mosley was very quiet for a few moments, and annoyed. He said he is "getting a little tired" of talking about race. He then asked what would be the point of having a character say he doesn't like the N-word.

"I don't think that I'm insulting anybody or denigrating anybody. ... I would never step outside the writing to say, 'Well, I'm trying to educate you the reader.' I definitely don't consider myself in any way an educator."

Mosley doesn't consider race a major component of his latest



novel. The "major" aspect of "Bad Boy Brawly Brown" is "fathers and sons," he insisted, about Aldridge Brown and his son, Brawly; Easy and his son, Jesus; and Easy and his own father. There is even a mention of Easy's paternal grandfather.

And there's also, of course, a mystery involved in "Brawly Brown," said Mosley, and there's "all kinds of concepts, like capitalism and crime." It's about a loss of a friend - his friend Mouse may or may not be dead - and a relationship with a woman. It's also about black male heroes. "I don't think that it's kind of racially based."

How would he say his characters are heroes?

"Easy is the easy one," Mosley said, "because he has identified himself in a way that many, many, many, many black men live in this country." He tries to live that life with dignity and he tries to help others who also have limited resources and can't solve their problems in the usual legal, social and ethical ways that many Americans take for granted.

And though Easy takes a gun when he's "doing something serious," it is also possible to be a hero in Mosley's world without using a gun. Socrates Fortlow in "Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned" has been released from prison after a 27-year sentence for murder and rape. Through his own will and determination, Fortlow attempts to make a new life for himself, and to use that life to help others. "He never carries a gun. Ever," Mosley said.

Mosley also wrote the teleplay based on that novel, which aired on HBO, and starred Laurence Fishburne. He said he goes to Los

Angeles about six times a year, not only to see his mother but to talk about other possible film deals, including one based on his collection of science fiction short stories called "Figureland." His first published novel, "Devil in a Blue Dress," was made into a movie in 1995, starring Denzel Washington.

The last time Mosley published an Easy Rawlins mystery was 1997's prequel "Gone Fishin,'" but fans have been waiting for the follow-up to 1996's "A Little Yellow Dog," which takes place in the fall of 1963.

Mosley said he's involved in lots of "stuff." He's now completing another nonfiction book tentatively called "What Next?" about the black response to terrorism. "Black America is so incredibly silent, especially our leaders, about America's war on terrorism."

There was terrorism in this country before 9/11, said Mosley. He cited not just lynchings, but also race riots, specifically the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, in which more than 300 blacks were killed

and the whole black neighborhood was driven out of town.

Mosley said the Tulsa riot was not unlike watching people streaming out of the World Trade Center, right after the attack, past his apartment nearby. "Who's best qualified to actually solve the problems that we're facing in America today?" he asked. "Well, black people are. Because we understand how to live with people who hate us."

Mosley has written about Easy in Los Angeles since Easy was 28 in 1948 and was fired by his white boss from his job in an airplane factory and needed to quickly find another way to pay his bills, namely "doing favors."

Will he give his readers a taste of what's to come?

Mosley looked into his lap, concentrating, as if he was afraid he would give something away. "No, no, no, no. Nope, nope. Not me," he finally said. "I will say that the whole issue about Mouse will be resolved in this collection of short stories, which is coming out next. That's all I'll say to my readers."

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James Harold Jennings, 1970's mixed media. Courtesy of Randy Sawyer

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