

# 5B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Missionary shares her trip to Haiti. See Travel on page 9B.

## Author sues Spielberg

By John Horn  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES — The author of a historical novel about a slave ship rebellion is suing the makers of the movie "Amistad" — filmed in Rhode Island — claiming Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks studio used the novel without permission as the basis for the film.

But an attorney for the studio says novelist Barbara Chase-Riboud is trying to claim a copyright on history and that her lawsuit is without merit.

John Shaeffer, Chase-Riboud's lawyer, has asked U.S. District Court Judge Audrey Collins to order DreamWorks to turn over a video of the movie, which Spielberg directed, and a finished screenplay.

Shaeffer said earlier drafts of the screenplay showed that entire characters and scenes were lifted from Chase-Riboud's 1989 book "Echo of Lions."

Since the copyright infringement lawsuit was filed, new evidence of the misappropriation has surfaced, Shaeffer said Wednesday.

"There is evidence that indicates actual use" of the novel, the attorney said. "They keep changing their story about where they got the story."

Among the similarities between the novel and the movie, Shaeffer said, is the character played by Morgan Freeman. Freeman stars as Theodore Joadson, an abolitionist. Shaeffer said the character appears in the novel, but not in the historical record, thereby suggesting DreamWorks and Spielberg stole it.

"Big deal," said Bert Fields, an attorney for DreamWorks. "The world was filled with abolitionists. A lot of them were black. The characters are totally different."

Like the novel, "Amistad" is based on a revolt on a Spanish slave ship in 1839. The several dozen slaves attempted to sail home but were captured and tried in American courts.

"This is an actual episode in American history and has been written about in a number of books," Fields said, adding that DreamWorks based its screenplay on another book and with the help of numerous historians. "This lady is essentially claiming she owns a piece of American history. It's really sad that this lady, who should be supporting this picture, is trying to destroy the project, to get money."

Shaeffer said he may ask Collins to block DreamWorks' release of the film, scheduled to debut Dec. 25. Such a court order might be difficult to obtain, as one of the elements Shaeffer might need to prove is a significant threat of irreparable injury to Chase-Riboud's copyright.

In addition to Freeman, "Amistad" stars Matthew McConaughey, Anthony Hopkins and Nigel Hawthorne. Newcomer Djimon Hounsou plays Cinque, the leader of the rebellious slaves. Spielberg filmed the movie at the Statehouse in Providence and in Newport this spring.

## Black is...



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

Tarra Ager, Tiffany Warren and Kimaada Moore work on a scene from "Blak Is. . ." as director Bryan Ferguson looks on. The opens this weekend on the JCSU campus.

## JCSU playwright hopes play sparks ideas

By Winfred B. Cross  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

What is being black and how do you spell it?

Playwright Bryan Ferguson spells it blak, just to be different, and he's defining it in a new play, "Blak Is. . .," which has a two-performance run at Biddle Hall on Johnson C. Smith University's campus this weekend.

Ferguson, a 21-year-old senior from Rochester, N.Y., wrote the play during his sophomore year and performed it once. "That was a trial shot," he said. "I wanted to see how I'd do at it. It did OK so I rewrote the play."

The new play is a choreopoem, which 90 percent of his

work. The rest is by friends and two by Langston Hughes — "Negro Speaks of Rivers" and "Dream Variation."

"The play takes a look at black life in general — our poetry, how we're portrayed in the media and an introspective look at ourselves," Ferguson said. "The aim of the play is to have people walk out with a definition of themselves, to finish the sentence."

The performance will feature actors with little or no stage experience — exactly what Ferguson wants.

"They are kinda raw," he said. "It adds to the realism. I wanted people to be real as possible. It adds to the flavor."

Ferguson said he's gotten backing from the school's administration. "JCSU

President) Dr. Yancy even requested I do the play this year," he said. "The school has been very supportive, which is really cool. (The administration) is really trying to strengthen the arts on the yard."

But Ferguson found it a little difficult getting students to participate.

"A lot of people have talent but choose not to show it," he said. But people are generally curious. Anticipation has been easier to get than participation."

Still, Ferguson has nearly 20 students in the production, with another 10 working behind the scenes.

Ferguson sees the plays message as universal.

"I'd like to take this play to other campuses — black or white," he said. "I really see this

as being a college play. If anything, hopefully it will open up the door for more artists on the yard to put together some quality work."

Ferguson has other works but is waiting to see the outcome of "Blak Is. . ." before committing to production. An honor student, Ferguson is working on graduating in the spring and participates in the Black Ink Monks, an artsy on-campus group.

"We're basically a bunch of friends with a title, he said. "We are trying to throw out more culture to students, to show other sides."

The play debuts 8 p.m. Friday at Biddle Hall as a free performance for students. The play opens to the public 8 p.m. Saturday.

## Local artist's song touches John Tesh

By Winfred B. Cross  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Why new age guru John Tesh carries spare batteries in his pocket while exercising isn't big news, but local singer Dalia is happy he does.

If he had not, he may have postponed listening to the last song of Dalia's self-titled CD on Pure Records, titled "I Miss You." A song about losing her mother. The song so moved Tesh he knew he had to use it on his forthcoming CD.

"He said he had an Epiphany," says Dalia. "He said he knew it was a great idea to do the song. It was a surprise. When I heard he was interested I thought he just wanted to talk to me in reference to the song. I think he wanted to add another verse to it, but we ended up repeating the chorus. It all just took me by surprise because it kinda came out of

nowhere."

Dalia was familiar with Tesh's music and was surprised he was interested in the serious tune. "His music is kinda happy, upbeat," she said. "I don't think I would have been as comfortable if he had not been able to identify with the song. He also lost his mother."

Tesh heard about the song from Scott Meyer, who worked at Pure Records before working with Tesh. Meyer liked Dalia's work and jumped at the chance at having Tesh hear her.

Dalia spent most of last week in California in the studio with Tesh working on the song. She said the experience was great.

"He was very comfortable to work with. He's laid back, kinda a regular guy," she said. "He's easy to talk to. It took a while to get used to his track, but it went well, I think. It's a little faster and has the extra chorus. And of course, it



From left to right: attorney Ken Harris, Dalia and John Tesh take a break from recording in a California studio.

has more music." Dalia said Tesh's CD will be completed by December and should be out early next year. A

single featuring r&b crooner James Ingram should be out by February. "I Miss You" could be released in May.

## Brown still full of music

By Lori Wiechman  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUGUSTA, Ga. — At 64, James Brown still gets top billing at Caesar's Palace, but his newest singles — the first since his release from jail six years ago — get play on nothing but low-power radio stations.

His unique rhythms and lyrics and boundless energy helped to build a music career that made him a cultural icon.

More than four decades since his first single, "Please, Please, Please," hit the charts in 1956, Brown's new music is not for sale in stores. Instead, he's trying to regain his loyal fan base on radio stations along the East Coast.

"I have a hit record right now," he said, during rehearsal in a historic theater in Augusta, a block from WAAW-FM, his low-power radio station. But he won't distribute the singles widely "because they're not going to get played."

Brown won't answer questions directly about why he's having a hard time getting his new music out and how his 1990 problems with the Internal Revenue Service and prison term affected his career.

Instead, he blames the strict radio station formats, such as country, rap or blues, for locking his music out of wide play.

"I just do soul," Brown said. "Soul is everything."

And he's not so crazy about younger artists, either. Rap artists and hip-hop singers who have added his rhythms and lyrics to their songs take airtime away from him, and they don't deserve the exposure, he said.

"They keep my songs hot and financially, too, I thank them, but I still love them enough to let them know that, at some point you have to know how to play," he said.

Despite Brown's comeback struggle, music experts say his past success will maintain his loyal fan base.

His show hasn't changed much over the years. Girls surround him on the stage, from the two scantily-clad teenagers dance to hip-hop choreography behind him and the six female backup singers who slither provocatively around him. He's accompanied by his 14-piece band, the Soul Generals.

He wears the same tight, flashy jumpsuits, none of which hide the extra pounds. His trademark thick, wavy hair hasn't changed a bit.

During his two-hour concerts, Brown dances and flops on the stage, although not as much as he did a decade ago. He still blasts out, "Ahhhhh!" in his trademark raspy, unintelligible voice.

Brown himself is more comfortable in his hometown of Augusta, where he is surrounded by friends who reaffirm the image he created decades ago.

"Where drama meets rhythm, James Brown is the reigning genius," said Tim White, editor of Billboard magazine and author of a book about the lives of musi-

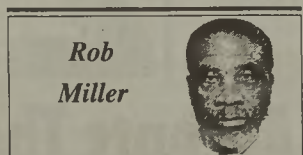
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SOUND



ADVICE

## Buying surround sound equipment can be confusing



Rob Miller

What is Surround Sound? First there was mono which utilized one channel of audio, then stereo, utilizing two channels of audio. This more than doubled the realism with advances in recording technolo-

gies and the sense of space that could be achieved over a mono recording. With advances in recording technologies and the increasing demands of the film and cinema environments multi channel formals have been developed to increase the audio realism for the listener.

However the surround sound arena can be confusing to professional as well as domestic users.

Dolby Laboratory is the cre-

ator of Dolby Surround Sound. There are six Dolby formats. They are as follows:

1) Dolby motion picture matrix (Dolby MP) This is fee encoding process used to generate surround sound. It is based on fee SQ Quadraphonic system that dates from the '70s and is designed for motion picture sound tracks. With this system, four channels are encoded; left, center, right and mono surround channel.

2) Dolby stereo is encoded Dolby Mp. If is encoded to stereo so that it fits on the stereo tracks of your VHS machine (or laser disc). Dolby Surround is the decoding process used to decode Dolby Stereo into surround sound.

3) Dolby Pro logic is an active (more expensive, higher quality) process also used to decode Dolby stereo into surround sound.

4) Lucas Film THX is an even

more expensive enhancement to Dolby pro logic.

5) Dolby AC-3, also called Dolby Surround Digital, is a digital encoding technique that is starting to become available to domestic users.

Dolby surround decoding and its more advanced form, pro logic, allows you to experience the same thrilling multi-dimensional effects you hear in

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