

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES BRIGGS

(These questions have been directed to Mr. Charles Briggs.)

Question: Could you briefly tell, who you are - I mean, what are some of the things you have done before coming here?

Charlie Briggs: Well - let's see - who I am? Well, I'm a Broadway stagemanager, I'm an actor - only when I have to be, because I don't like actors - not as people, but as actors. As far as Broadway is concerned, I've stagemanaged "Purlie", "La Blanche" with James Earl Jones, "Don't Play Us Cheap", "Ceremonies in Dark Old Men". I've directed at the University of Chicago, and Ohio State - I've directed, not too much in New York because I can't find any producers that will let me direct a show the way I want to, so I've only directed in situations that I've been able to control.

After coming down with Steve Carter from the Negro Ensemble, my feeling about doing an all-black show, was that there was not enough black talent on campus to do an all-black show and do it really well. So we decided to integrate the cast, and get rid of all types of uptightness - how successfully this is being done, I'm not too sure about right now. I guess my other two credentials are I've been editor of two black newspapers.

Question: I've figured that you are probably asked this all the time, but what do you have to say about the movement of Black films?

Charlie Briggs: Well, first of all, they're not "black films"...and it's a rip off. The black man is becoming just as enslaved as he was in 1619. He's getting just a pinch of what's being made off of the movies. I know of an instance of one black star getting only \$16,000 and the film to date has grossed over \$16,000,000. And what's happening is that the "actors" that are doing the majority of these films, are not really ACTORS...for example of the Moses Gunn or James Earl Jones caliber. Many are people willing to make a fast buck, and they're willing to be used any way in which the man wants to use them. Not only are the

"stars" of these black films getting the shaft, but they are using very few black technicians of any sort, and they will tell you that there are "no sort animals", but I know that in New York, those "animals" camera-men, etc., are forced to do other types of work because the Unions will not let them in.

Question: What about the caliber of those films?

Charlie Briggs: As far as we're concerned, they're the worst - because most of them are emphasizing things of violence, which most young black people can't afford to get into these days.

We've had enough trouble all our lives without emulating that which we see on the screen. I thought "Buck and the Preacher" was good - and "Blacula", for all it was worth - it was funny. "The Memory of Malcolm X," which was excellent and "Lady Sings the Blues" - which was all right for Hollywood. I mean, it's really very exciting for a night of period costumes, and settings, but not for the way it told the life of Billie Holiday.

Question: What about "Sounder" -- did you see "Sounder"?

Charlie Briggs: I saw "Sounder", and I found in "Sounder" the script was great and the acting was really fantastic. The directing, for what it was, was okay, but Lonnie Elder wrote it, black people acted it, and the problem of the film was there was no coercion; you have a white man filming what should have been a total black experience. I've been telling my friends it's like Walt Disney shooting the "Grapes of Wrath" - it has that kind of impact. You can't believe that people are starving to death and all with these beautiful rays of light hitting them in the face, shining around them.

Question: As far as young people in acting are concerned, do you think that there is a lack of discipline?

Charlie Briggs: There is a definite "lack of discipline". In the mere fact that they're

students, and they're young, and they can get away with it. For instance shows like "Hair", and "Superstar", despite their problems are all peopled by young people. Some of them young or younger than the School of the Arts people and if they can do that, even though they may be exceptions - but I think anyone who is brave enough to call themselves actors, and come into a school for acting, then they should discipline themselves accordingly, and I haven't found that to be the case.

Question: So, why did you decide to do "Cavedwellers"? A lot of students said that they'd had hopes you'd do a black play.

Charlie Briggs: The basic problem was that I thought it would be almost impossible to find a black play that would please everybody, and secondly if I did a play predominately black, I would still have problems casting the white characters. I'd read "Cavedwellers" about 15 years ago, and I have always been one to believe that a director can only do good work with something that he enjoys. And too many directors have found plays pushed on them for money in New York and have found that that's not where it's at. In all the plays that I've done instinctively, I like them for the philosophy that they expound or for the spectacle that can be created. The only black play that I've found fashionable to do these days has been "Ceremonies in Dark Old Men".

Question: What do you think would be a good set-up to cover a four-year college training-type program?

Charlie Briggs: Well, I think that dance and music should be stressed equally as hard. In dance, there's a certain form of dance wherein the student must take EXTRA. Especially if you're planning to work in New York, tap dance is definitely coming back in. You're going to need heavy training in speech, mime and movement. And movement on stage, because the art of really handling yourself on stage is something that 90 percent of the actors in New York don't know how to do. There

should also be a kind of format to organize what is being taught, instead of everybody running around doing his own thing.

Question: what are some of the things that you plan to do when you leave here?

Charlie Briggs: I'll go into rehearsal, March the fifth, for a Children's play. And later in May, I'll be stagemanaging Lena Horne's, "One Woman Show", at the Palace. Following

that I have two filmstrips that I'm going to be directing, plus Van Peebles Company has the "Return of Sweetback", and "Ain't Suppose to Die" - the film, and then we were going to do one, "The Last American", which is a novel for him (Van Peebles). And that's what I have in mind so far...and MAYBE come back here next year and do a faculty show.

Henry Pankey



200 Motels: Directed by Frank Zappa with Ringo Starr as Larry the Dwarf, The Mothers of Invention and the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

200 Motels is Frank Zappa's first full length motion picture. Since the Mothers of Invention invaded the music world with "Freakout", Frank Zappa has become a household word. He and his zany band of musicians have been a plague for bubble gum and aluminium siding for over seven years. Zappa Creations have come in various shapes and sizes; Larry "Wild Man" Fisher, Captain Beefheart and Alice Cooper are just a few of the acts his two record companies have released.

"200 Motels" is a diary of the Mothers on tour. The original Mothers appear helter-skelter in the plot or the plot appears helter-skelter with them. The new Mothers consist mainly of Howard Kaylan and Mark Volman. These two maniacs prance and dance through the film but fail to come across as vocalists. In fact, the Mothers fail to get off the ground in this movie. Instead of their usual high standard of wind and keyboard work, the band rotates around the low standard of Kaylan and Volman. The only good music is done in Zappa's presence (which is rare) and by the London Philharmonic.

Ringo Starr is funny as Larry the Dwarf, Zappa's prototype who spies on the band. He appears now and again trying to steal creative ideas the band may have (which again are few). There is a brutal scene where Larry fights with a sheet of manuscript paper.

Former Mothers Jimmy Carl Black and Don Preston add a few tender moments to the film. Any insights or morals to be gained from "200 Motels" would come from the mouth of Black: "Lissen I don't give a damn about art, I'm a professional. I got five kids and a wife at home and I only got two questions: Where's the beer and can I borrow two dollars till Friday?"

Technically the movie was superb.

-David Wilson

----- Humor -----

Strange Letter Department

Dear Sir, Madame and-or Fellow Pork Chops:

It is upon a matter of the greatest importancy, a matter which concerns us all, be he scientist, student, businessman, golf ball, or mortician: a heinous situation which has existed since the first caveman dug the first divot on the fourteenth sandtrap, but has up until now spread hither and yon, not to mention thither. A situation so magnoc-topus that its very tentacles, not to mention dirty feet attach the very roots and foundation of our society.

WE CANNOT, WE SHALL NOT, WE MUST NOT, WE DASN'T, WE DOESN'T AND WE AIN'T GONNA PUT UP WITH THIS NO MORE: We must wipe this scourge from the surface of our midst. (Hut! Hut! and Varoom!) It is imperative that we, through our three-fold attack: Educational programs, mass meetings, and putting pressure on our legislators, make known to the world this cancerous problem, penultimate to none, which is devouring our morble fibers tooth and ear: (TAKE HEED, O YE BAHTHAWAINIANS,) HELP STAMP OUT SODOMY IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

UNITE! Together we can: Produce television extravaganzas, write catchy limericks, magazine and newspaper articles, and sponsor panel discussions at huge rallies, showing all how sodomy has veritably leaped into our public schools. Through these means and by encouraging people everywhere to circulate petitions, brillo pads and bowling scoresheets and by sending cards, letters, telegrams and old cereal boxtops along with their shoe size and urine specimens to their Congressmen, we can urge our lawmakers to pass legislation forcing ducks, geese, oscelots, marmosets, goldfish, cows, pigs and other vermin out of our public schools and back into the barnyards, forests and fishbowls where God intended for them to be. WE NEED laws calling for the muzzling of goldfish. WE NEED laws which will prohibit cows, sheep, pigs and reptiles from roaming around our public schools without being on a leash and accompanied by a consenting adult or pickled in formaldehyde in a biology lab. WE NEED laws prohibiting the co-habitation of lockers.

By these means and by none alone can we achieve our goals, be they what they maybe: As the noted theoretician, philosopher

and medieval Rococo plumber C.S. Lewis never so aptly said "The Timaeus has none of the erotic mysticism we find riveted to the Dispepsie or the Phaedrus, and almost nothing about politics and pickle farming. And though the ideas or forms are mentioned, their real place in Plato's theory of knowledge is non-existent, although it may be found in the lower mezzanine basement men's room at the Parthenon as well as lower Dutch and higher German hieroglyphic inscriptions in the burial chamber of Pharoah Pancake II in the Minute Pyramid outside mid-town Cleveland."

As we fight this cancer together, always dreaming of a world in which our children might grow up unmitigated by Gaul and still in probate surgery, we must keep in mind, above and below all else, the slogan, the motto, THE VERY ESSENCE of our organization and our ordeal: CAMELS AND ORGANS GO FOREVER.

For further information and reprints, call 725-7211.

Hoping to see you in the battle, Sodomer P. Boat, National President; Rufus D. (for dog) Puttling, 1st vice president in charge of Erotic Programming; Juan Puttling, Executive Treasurer.

Late News Corner

Late developments and vicious rumors being spread about campus have been piling up higher than usual recently, so I figure it's time they be aired for whatever they may cause.

The eight foot electrified barb wire fence which has been slowly erected to isolate the campus from the nasty creeps prowling about as of late, has been shorting out but the barb wire is holding strong. Security said that this drastic move was made in light of the dim actions taken by "questionable outsiders". Many of the local people, however, have been seen cruising by with their families for a safer look at what's going on inside. Security has assured me that the fence will soon be completed and impregnable, keeping all the apathy within.

The School of Design and Production keeps insisting that they are really here and belong to the rest of the school. They even went so far as to place a sign over the place to inform the ignorant. Unfortunately weary truck drivers are still pulling their rigs inside saying, "Dis is Salem Spring ain't it"? Hopefully, they're installing some form of communication to find out just what is going on - the rest of the school that is.

It appears that Mickey finally got mad at somebody and forgot to say "Hurry back now!", nearly shortchanging himself. Micekeys' School Of the Arts stock market has risen sharply over the years but fortunately his prices can't possible get any higher.

The cafeteria people are saddened because the generous meals they sent to the impoverished, starving masses in Bangladesh was rejected as unsanitary and unfit for human consumption by Bangladesh health authorities and shipped back. The cafeteria was glad that the food wouldn't go to waste and is being reheated for your lunch.

Winston-Salem officials were somewhat offended and angered lately by accusations that Winston-Salem is a cultural wasteland. They went to great lengths to refute such accusations and finally proved to those know it all "artsy's" that Billings county in North Dakota, pop. 1,198, had fewer theatre goers than did Winston-Salem.

And of course for all the prospective movie fans the situation looks somewhat better this week. A new movie by Humphrey Bogart is scheduled to open at the Thruway. And the Flamingo Drive-In will be showing "Sawed Off Sex Mutants" rated grade Z, with lots and lots of jelly rolling.

Anyway, that's all for now. Keep your doors locked and the fun open. -Jacques Penney