



Cedric "The Entertainer" & Niecy Nash

Cedric "The Entertainer" & Niecy Nash Bring Soul to TV

By Brandon I. Brooks

Special to the NNPA from the Los Angeles Sentinel

Cedric "The Entertainer" is coming back to television with his own new original series, "The Soul Man."

Starring alongside Cedric will be the very funny and charismatic Niecy Nash.

Both Cedric "The Entertainer" and Niecy Nash caught up with the Sentinel and Watts Times for an intimate interview on the set of their new series, at the CBS Studios in Universal City, California.

LAWT: Tell me about the new sitcom and what attracted you both to the series?

Cedric "The Entertainer" (CTE): The show is called "The Soul Man." It's a show I created, produced and starring in. In the show I play Boyce Ballentine, Cedric or Reverend Boyce Ballentine, an ex-entertainer superstar who gets the calling late in life and moves my family, my wife, and my daughter away from Vegas back to St. Louis and become the minister of my dad's church. It's just basically a story of transition, how you go from one lifestyle or one life to another.

Niecy Nash (NN): I play Lolli Ballentine and I loved the life my husband Boyce had when he was an R&B singer. I loved the shiny lifestyle, Vegas the Bellagio. Not crazy about coming back to St. Louis, but I'm supportive of my husband and there I am. And it's so funny because this particular story mirrors a life I use to live with my ex-husband who was an R&B singer, who got called into the ministry. So I have been a first lady before. It wasn't easy then and it's not easy now.

LAWT: When did each of you know this project was right for you?

CTE: I developed it and wrote the script with Susan Martin from "Hot in Cleveland." So really when I was developing the world out, I knew we would have a lot of fun. When looking for a TV wife Niecy's name came up. We had worked together before on a movie I had done called, "Code Name: The Cleaner." It was also the idea was really fresh too me. You knew her talent from "Reno 911" as well as her real life shows but I just thought it was going to be really unique. So we met for lunch and she told me this about her real life and I couldn't believe it. She thought I was making it up, I thought she was making it up; I'm like wait a minute? It just ended up being a perfect match. It's been dynamic and I'm really thankful and blessed that she was available and wanted to play along and we have been having a great time.

NN: I have never been a TV wife before. Been a lot of things, concubine, girl on the side, you know, freak of the weak, but no now I am official. I am a TV wife and I have to say Cedric creates an environment where the set is so much fun. You know and I said if I knew it was going to be this much fun being a wife I would have been a TV wife a long time ago. But I didn't know.

LAWT: We have not seen a show like this, and when I say a show like this, this type of theme (family theme) for African Americans in a while. There have been similar attempts for instance with "Dawson's Creek" (My Wife and Kids), but it's refreshing to see a family oriented show for not just Black families but all families on television. Was that your goal when you approached this project?

CTE: Definitely, for me I try to build a brand that is inclusive with my comedy and one that appeals to everybody to come and watch the show.

Being a family man myself you know raising kids - living that particular lifestyle I thought it was something that could be really refreshing. The story line of being able to kind of show the general things like having a grandfather involved on the show in a regular basis and that kind of relationship with the extended family with the younger brother who is a little different in age group. Like all of these things were things that I thought would be interesting story points of view to tell about our community and for me, that was something I definitely wanted to run at and again probably not since Cosby in a real sense have you seen something that resembled fun loving family that is having a good time but also has challenges and struggles or whatever they have to deal with. So that's the world I thought would be really interesting.

NN: I was excited to show Black love on TV. You know because a lot of time with the program we have now, even if it has wife in the title, the girls aren't wives. If there is a man involved it's a yelling and arguing. And even in a traditional sit-com, you know usually the husband and wife are other's foil. It's like that's who you get your cheap shots in with but I love the idea that we just love each other. You get to see a couple that loves each other not that they're perfect but they are perfect for another and they are trying to be better so that is what I am happy about bringing.

LAWT: Even though the show is based in a church atmosphere the series still incorporates many different real - world problems. Niecy, tell me a little bit more about your character and what you are trying to bring because we are seeing you in a new light?

NN: Even though it's a new light in TV, it's an old light for me. I'm on my second marriage, it's not a new light. I have an ex-husband, a new husband and a TV husband. I got more husbands than I could shake a stick at. And now I understand what being a wife is. So playing a wife on television is really another extension of who I am. I have my own children, my own family so to be able to bring that motherly love. But the truth of the matter is who we are outside of our character's they blend together a little bit. So there is a bit of extra mothering. We are able to move around and bring so many real elements and nuances to what we do because it's not far from our truths in a sense.

LAWT: What advice do you have for up and coming actors and actresses or anyone looking to get it in the business?

NN: To the new generation that's coming, they move around, a lot of them, like there is a sense of entitlement. You know doing what you doing hook me up! And you know, I am scared of the hustle because if you don't have someone to help you will you really know how to hustle.

The other thing is I don't think you need anybody else to believe in your dream, that is why they call it self-esteem. When you believe, that is enough to carry you through the next point in it all.

CTE: I definitely try to tell people to love what you do first and don't worry about blowing up. Most of the time it's kind of to that same point, what you hear is people really want to have that star experience right away. "I did a play last week man, put me in a movie I'm ready to go, I did it I rocked it." The thing is that you got to be able to climb the different rungs on the ladder so if ever you go up and you have to come down, you don't have to fall down to the bottom. You can fall for or five steps get yourself together and then climb back up. So you know its okay to do the journey. The journey is going to be far more valuable than the rocketing to the top.

LAWT: Why should people tune in and watch "The Soul Man?"

CTE: You got to watch "The Soul Man," Wednesday's on TV Land, it's funny on it, Niecy's on it, and then I said so...Its a great show of family values, the struggle, changing your life, going from one life to another, growing up getting smarter, becoming wiser and then having people recognize that and it is okay to be known for one thing, mature to something else. Watch it for that reason.

NN: I would tell everyone to watch "The Soul Man" because I think that this is a show that could be appointment TV. Where everyone in your family can find some character in here they relate to, something funny that they identify with. I definitely think you either see yourself or someone in this family and you can watch it with your entire family.

LAWT: What else do you guys have going on outside of television, anything we should be on the lookout for?

CTE: I'm still touring. I'm scheduling a show in the Los Angeles area for August usually I'm on out on the road on the east coast. But creating producing other shows, a very cool movie called coming out called "Grass Roots," it's a little more of a dramatic role for me.

I play a Seattle politician in this film.

NN: There is a lot going on. God has been very kind so I have my hands in everything. I just launched an accessories line on the Home Shopping Network. I have a book coming out. Producing, creating and developing a lot of things.

THE CAROLINA TIMES
L.E. AUSTIN

Editor-Publisher 1927-1971

(USPS 091-380)

(Mrs.) Vivian Austin Edmonds
Editor-Publisher - 1971-2002

Kenneth W. Edmonds
Editor-Publisher - 2002-

Published every Thursday (dated Saturday) (except the week following Christmas)
Durham, N.C., by United Publishers, Incorporated. Mailing address: P.O. Box 3825
Durham, N.C. 27702-3825. Office located at 923 Old Fayetteville Street, Durham, N.C. 27705
Periodicals Postage paid at Durham, North Carolina 27705

Volume 91, Number 24

POSTMASTER:
Send address changes to THE CAROLINA TIMES, P.O. Box 3825, Durham, N.C. 27705.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year, Durham County, \$18.00 (plus \$1.44 sales tax)
One year, outside Durham County, \$22.00 (plus \$1.68 sales tax; one year, out of state, \$30.00)
Single copy \$3.00. Postal regulations REQUIRE advance payment on subscriptions.
All communications and make all checks payable to: THE CAROLINA TIMES
NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE: Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.
West 38th Street, Suite 800, New York, New York 10018.

Member: United Press International Photo Service, North Carolina Black Publishers Association, Associated Press.

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This is notification to all citizens, particularly potential homebuyers that the City of Durham is phasing out its city-wide First-Time Homebuyers Program effective July 31, 2012. In an attempt to accommodate those applicants who are in the process, we will accept applications that are postmarked or received on or before July 31, 2012. The First-Time Homebuyers Program provides second mortgage financing at 2% amortized over 30 years and payable in monthly installments to income eligible low to moderate-income individuals.

As a result of reduced federal funding and the recently approved Southside Revitalization Project, purchase assistance under this program will be limited to the Southside Neighborhood beginning August 1, 2012 and will no longer be available city-wide.

For more information, please contact the City of Durham Department of Community Development Homeownership Hotline at: 919-560-4000



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