

# AT THE FLICKS

## Guillaume Goes To The Movies In *Lean On Me*

Robert Guillaume--for nine years known and loved by millions as Benson, the television character who rose from being a butler on "Soap" to a lieutenant governor in his own series, "Benson"--now reveals a distinctly dramatic side of his talents by starring with Morgan Freeman and Beverly Todd in the rousing, hugely entertaining new "Lean on Me," the true story of America's most controversial high school principal, Joe Clark. The film, directed and executive-produced by John G. Avildsen and produced by Norman Twain, will soon be released to theaters around the country by Warner Bros. Michael Schiffer wrote the screenplay, and the score is by composer Bill Conti of "Rocky" and "The Right Stuff" fame.

In the film, Guillaume plays Dr. Frank Napier, who hires long-time friend and colleague Joe Clark (Morgan Freeman) to the seemingly impossible task of cleaning up one of the toughest schools in America--Eastside High in Paterson, New Jersey. Throughout Clark's risky tenure, he and Napier clash ideological swords on occasion, but both fight for the same goals--a better education for the school's mostly black and Hispanic students.

Robert Guillaume was raised in a St. Louis ghetto by his grandmother, and he dreamed of becoming the first black tenor at the Metropolitan Opera. "When I first stepped out on a stage," he recalls, "I did so because somebody told me I could sing. I continued because it was the only thing that was challenging me." This ambition directed him to Washington University, where he studied voice, and then to a theatrical apprenticeship in Cleveland. To support his artistic training, Guillaume worked as a streetcar



Patterson school district's Superintendent of Schools Frank Napier (Robert Guillaume, right) argues with his long-time friend Joe Clark (Morgan Freeman), when Clark turns down an offer to become Eastside High School principal in Warner Bros.' highly charged new drama "Lean On Me."

conductor and postal clerk, but he finally made it to Broadway in the musical version of "Golden Boy" starring Sammy Davis, Jr. and "Porgy and Bess." Guillaume achieved major recognition in the title role of "Purlie" and then as Nathan Detroit in the acclaimed all-black revival of "Guys and Dolls"--a performance which earned him a Tony nomination. Guillaume's love of theatre brought him back to Broadway in 1985 to reprise "Purlie" with Sherman Helmsley and Melba Moore.

Of his "Benson" role, Guillaume says, "My whole tenure was to conspicuously stay out of stereotypical, sociological traps. To me, Benson had to be black, someone the audience didn't feel was trying to be white." Guillaume's vast popularity with audiences is now bringing him back to a new series of his own for ABC, "The Robert Guillaume Show," in which he portrays a marriage counselor.

Over the years, Guillaume has expanded his arena of talent to

include producing and performing as a successful singer/entertainer, where he is much in demand at theatres and night clubs throughout the U.S. and Canada. He has also co-starred in the Neil Simon film "Seems Like Old Times" with Goldie Hawn and Chevy Chase, co-starred opposite Gary Coleman in the telefeatures "The Kid With the Broken Halo" and "The Kid With the 200 I.Q." (which he also produced), and is also seen with Robin Givens in the television movie "Penthouse."

## Art Evans Plays Pivotal Role In *The Mighty Quinn*

Developed and produced by A&M Films for M-G-M, "The Mighty Quinn" is based on an award-winning novel by A.H.Z. Carr. The story's West Indies culture, texture and setting -- and intricately crafted murder mystery -- was brilliantly filmed on location in and around the town of Port Antonio, on Jamaica's northeastern coastline -- only months before the devastation of their last hurricane season.

...childhood friends have grown to manhood, Xavier Quinn (Denzel Washington) is educated in the United States, and returns to the island as the Chief of Police. Comical, but complex, Maubee (Robert Townsend) has stayed behind and become a local legend -- a swashbuckling sort of character. With the brutal murder of a wealthy businessman at a local resort, Maubee becomes the prime suspect of Police Chief Quinn, constantly eluding him in a frustrating game of hide and seek.

Fellow police officer Jump Jones (Art Evans) pursuing the investigation, is wary of the camaraderie of Quinn and Maubee's youth.

In addition to the compelling story - the musical themes and soundtrack combine Pop, R&B

and Reggae, appealing to a wide musical audience. Rita Marley, wife of the late musical legend Bob Marley, served as a musical consultant, while his daughters Cedella and Sharon perform and appear in the film.

Art's many additional film credits include Spike Lee's "School Daze," "White of the Eye," "Ruthless People" with Bette Midler and Danny DeVito, "Jo Jo Dancer, Your Life Is Calling" with Richard Pryor, Columbia Pictures' "Fright Night," "Kon Landis' "Into the Night," and John Carpenter's "Christine." Perhaps his most memorable role, however, was that of Pvt. Wilkie in Columbia Pictures' "A Soldier's Story." Art co-stars as Morgan in the TV comedy series "9 to 5" and has made numerous guest and featured TV appearances.

Art soon begins filming the Smoking Gun Production "Mom," a darkly humorous, contemporary and chilling horror thriller - with Stella Stevens, Mark Thomas Miller, and Jean Bates.

On a more personal and joyful note, Art and his wife Babe (Gillian) Evans expect the birth of their first child in April.



Art Evans starring as Officer Jump Jones, with Denzel Washington in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's "The Mighty Quinn."

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