

4B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Opera diva gets lavish CD release



By Mike Silverman
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Essential Leontyne Price, an 11-CD set of operas and duets, vocal pieces for soprano and orchestra and a variety of lieder, spirituals and religious songs.

BMG Classics
09026-68153-2.
Since she sang her farewell "Aida" at the Metropolitan Opera 12 years ago, Leontyne Price has become a living legend, and one with an unusually vast legacy of recordings to keep her memory alive.

This new collection samples more than 12 hours of the many RCA recordings she made, most of them when she was in her prime from the late 1950s well into the 1970s.

And what a prime it was! At her peak, Price had a uniquely warm and commanding voice, with a strong but never strident top and an urgent, earthy quality in her lower chest tones. Technically, she was a "lirico spinto soprano," ideal for some of the heavier dramatic roles, but light and flexible enough to sound at home in Mozart or Robert Schumann.

"A very sensual, soaring sound," is the way she herself describes her voice in an 18-minute interview with RCA's John Pfeiffer that is included in the final disc as a bonus.

Her signature stage roles are represented here: Verdi's Ethiopian princess; his two Leonores, in "La Forza del Destino" and "Il Trovatore," the latter the role of her historic Met debut in 1961; Gershwin's Bess; the great Mozart and Puccini heroines.

But there's much more—arias and scenes from operas that she never or rarely performed on stage. Among the treasures: a simple, profoundly moving "When I am laid to earth," from Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas"; an eloquent account of Mme. Lidoine's solo from Poulenc's "Dialogue des Carmelites," a role Price sang at the opera's U.S. premiere in San Francisco; and her classic account of Samuel Barber's "Knoxville: Summer of 1915," heartbreaking in its shift from childlike optimism to tragic bleakness.

The later phase of her career is represented in excerpts from a Met concert with mezzo Marilyn Horne from 1982. In duets from Bellini's "Norma" and Mozart's "Cosi fan tutte," the loss of luster in her voice is evident, like a fine piece of satin from which the sheen has worn away. Still, the artistry is there, the evenness of line, the delicacy and above all the aristocratic poise.

The last five discs, devoted largely to lieder, spirituals and other sacred songs, come as a bit of a letdown. Price is a

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Jackson, McHenry use Charlotte in latest film

By Mark Pendergrass
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Lights...camera...action...isn't terminology often heard on the streets of Charlotte. That's usually during filming of television shows and movies in big cities such as New York or Los Angeles.

However, the Queen City is becoming a part of an era for filmmakers "going south" to make a box office smash.

Last week, Doug McHenry and George Jackson of Jackson-McHenry Entertainment completed the filming of "Body Count," a major film project, in Charlotte. In December, film crews, actors, stunt men, and truckloads of equipment made uptown look like Hollywood. The film will be released this summer.

"Body Count" features Forest Whitaker, Ving Rhames, David Caruso, John Leguizamo, and newcomer Donnie Walberg (formerly of singing group New Kids on the Block).

WBAV/101.9 sponsored a wrap-up party at the Cotton Street Diner on South Boulevard to celebrate the completion of the Charlotte shoot.

Hosted by WBAV/WPEG President Wayne Brown and V-101.9 radio personality Janine Davis, a number of local political, sports and business figures came to pay tribute.

"We wanted to acknowledge the accomplishments of two prominent black film makers



PHOTOMARK PENDERGRASS

McHenry and Jackson have been together since college days.

in the industry while they were in Charlotte," Brown said. "As a voice and ear for the black community, we are responsible for recognizing successful businessmen behind the scenes who seldom get the accolades of the stars in front of the camera."

The event enabled attendees the opportunity to meet one of the most respected and influential African American film making duos in Hollywood. With film credits such as "A Thin Line Between Love and Hate" (\$33 million gross), "Jason's Lyric," "House Party II" and "House Party III" (\$20 million gross), "The Walking Dead," "New Jack City" (\$50 million gross) and "Krush Groove" (\$15 million gross) on their resume, Jackson and McHenry are no strangers to

success. So why choose Charlotte as one of the movie's locations?

"...Charlotte is a growing city and is attempting to diversify itself to attract businesses of all types... including the film industry," McHenry said. "What makes Charlotte great is that there is a lack of bureaucracy and escalated expenses often incurred with filming in a major city. Charlotte is a beautiful city, North Carolina is a wonderful state. The people are intelligent and very cordial. Also, we were able to hire trained crew members from the Carolinas to assist in the project."

Jackson adds: "Charlotte is conducive to all aspects of big, cosmopolitan areas. It is an exciting city with hardworking, intelligent, skilled person-

nel. The Queen City provided assets without handicaps while filming this movie. It was a great experience."

Charlotte's appeal is still growing. Academy award-winning actress Whoopi Goldberg filmed the basketball-influenced film "Eddie" a few years ago. According to Jackson and McHenry, Charlotte is the type of city that will continue to attract filmmakers. The advantage of having a pictorial skyline, views and scenic locations of New York without millions of people is a blessing in disguise, they said.

In 1985, the Harvard University graduates decided to merge their collective efforts as independent film producers to form Jackson-McHenry Entertainment. That was also the year of the company's first feature film, "Krush Groove." The film's success opened doors and provided the duo with the opportunity to launch careers for major artists such as New Edition, The Fat Boys, LL Cool J, Blair Underwood, Run-DMC, Sheila E., Kurtis Blow, record mogul/Motown CEO Andre Harrell as well as themselves.

"The partnership was developed from a mutual respect for each other and a love for the business," Jackson said. "Hollywood is difficult for anyone in the business, not only African Americans. Our mutual goals and objectives allowed us to make our dreams come true."

Jackson, a Harlem, N.Y. native, and Los Angeles-born McHenry can be compared to

members of a collegiate fraternity. Both men will not deny that their success can be accredited to hard work, education, and each other. In a business that can be transitory, they have carved their niche into the film industry and have left lasting impressions on movie/television executives as well as the movie public.

The recent expansion of their business has enabled Jackson and McHenry to develop Jackson-McHenry Entertainment, Elephant Walk Management Company and Slang (a worldwide Internet web site). The successful projects created by these entities includes "A Thin Line Between Love & Hate" soundtrack on Jac Mac/Warner Bros. Records, the development and/or co-production of UPN's top rated sitcom "Malcolm & Eddie" starring Malcolm Jamal-Warner and Eddie Griffin (who is also managed under Elephant Walk Management) and various future television and movies deals such as: New Jack City II and a remake of the classic '70s African American movie of the "The Mack."

"We are mainstream filmmakers who create mainstream product through a particular perspective - a unique perspective... that of African Americans," McHenry said. "We do not try to produce the same type of film twice. We have diverse work. However, by choice, we want to continue the majority of our work with African American actors."

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Thompson puts his body in acting

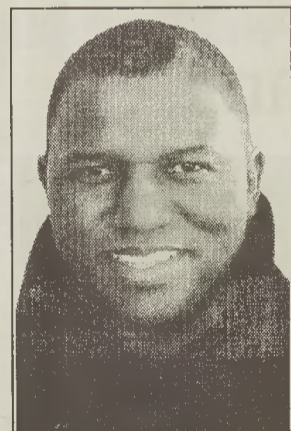
By Winfred B. Cross
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Dee Thompson is a Charlotte native bitten by the acting bug. So powerful the sting that he moved to Los Angeles to jump-start his career.

So it's a bit ironic that he latest part in a film brings him back to Charlotte, at the back door of the First Ward neighborhood in which he grew up.

The movie? "Body Count," a film starring Forrest Whitaker ("The Crying Game"), David Caruso ("NYPD Blue") and Ving Rhames ("Pulp Fiction"). Thompson serves as a photo and body double for Whitaker.

What does a body double do? "Basically, they use you when the person is not being seen on



Thompson

camera," Thompson said. "You do stand-in work for that per-

son. The director uses you to set lighting and you may actually do the scene."

Ironically, the 6-foot-4, 240-lb. Thompson isn't an exact match to the 6-foot-2, 260-lb. Whitaker. But the film's casting director obviously was impressed. Thompson got the job. He also got to know Whitaker pretty well.

"Basically, we talked about strategies in acting," Thompson said. "I was basically asking for advice."

Thompson said Whitaker is considering him for his next film "Hope Floats," which began casting in Los Angeles this week.

"Body Count" centers around four men who try to rob an art museum, in hopes to sell the

ill-gotten booty for \$15 million. Things don't go as planned and the job starts to unravel.

The Charlotte Convention Center was transformed into the art museum. Sound stages were built in the old convention center and were used in filming car chase scenes. Shooting took place for two weeks and wrapped last week.

Thompson, 35, doesn't have a speaking part in "Bodycount," but he will in "Bulworth," a film starring Halle Berry and Warren Beatty.

"I'm a bouncer in a club," he said. "The film is set in Compton. Beatty is a congressman running for reelection. He falls for Berry and tries to get with her."

Thompson started acting

early. His first appearance on stage was in "Empire of the Ants," done by his First grade class.

Thompson started his professional career at Pease Auditorium on Central Piedmont Community College's campus in Thornton Wilder's "Our Town." He's done such local productions as "The Second City," "Hating To See The Sunrise" and a holiday musical cabaret produced by Theatre Charlotte.

Thompson has done guest spots on the Fox Network's "L.A. Heat," and ABC's "High Incidence." Thompson, who served in the Navy, hopes to make an appearance on CBS's navel drama "Jag."

Cosby's generosity wasn't enough for student

Verena Dobnik
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK - A woman accused of trying to extort millions of dollars from Bill Cosby is among the numerous students who have benefited from the comedian's belief that hope for young blacks lies in education.

With his own doctorate, Cosby has been speaking at graduation ceremonies for years and has backed up his efforts with donations of time and money—including \$20 million to mostly black Spelman College in Atlanta.

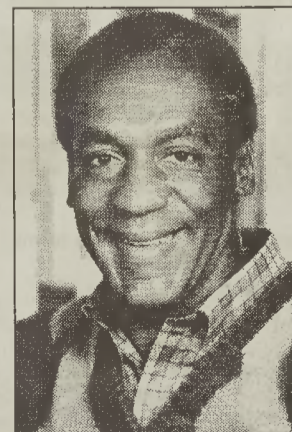
But one act of kindness

apparently backfired.

Autumn Jackson, 22, who had received tuition money from Cosby for years, tried to extort \$40 million from him, federal prosecutors charged. She claimed to be Cosby's illegitimate daughter and earlier this month threatened to sell her story. Cosby's lawyers contacted the FBI after getting another fax from Ms. Jackson on Thursday, the day Cosby's son, Ennis, was shot to death in an apparent robbery attempt in Los Angeles.

Cosby has denied he is her father.

Jackson, of Los Angeles, and an alleged accomplice, Jose



Cosby

Medina, 51, of Bethesda, Ohio, were arraigned Tuesday in federal court in New York and held without bail.

Medina's lawyer, Neil Checkman, said his client was not part of any extortion conspiracy. Medina says he is a screenwriter, the lawyer said.

"I don't believe he necessarily knew that anything was going on," Checkman said.

Jackson was among numerous talented students around the country to whom Cosby and his wife, Camille, have given aid.

Those chosen "have to meet strict, scholarship criteria," Joel Brokaw, a family

spokesman in Los Angeles, said Tuesday. He said he did not know where Ms. Jackson attended college, what she studied or how the Cosbys heard of her.

"It's a philanthropic activity they do very privately. And they're very hands-on about it, monitoring their progress closely," he said, adding that he couldn't estimate how many young people have benefited over the years.

Cosby, never shy about pointing out problems in the black community, urges young people not to blame their setbacks on race. Instead, he said in an

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Police have no new clues in death of Ennis Cosby

By Scott Lindlaw
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES - The goateed man depicted in a police sketch as another possible witness to the Ennis Cosby slaying was candid and cooperative, police said, but unable to give them any help in finding

the killer.

"He did not have any additional information of substance to offer," police Cmdr. Tim McBride said.

Meanwhile, CBS reported Tuesday night that it had received a threatening fax, purportedly from the same woman police arrested in New

York over the weekend for allegedly trying to extort \$40 million from the victim's father. Authorities said she claimed to be entertainer Bill Cosby's illegitimate daughter.

The elder Cosby has denied being related to the woman, identified as Autumn Jackson. Police say they don't believe

the extortion case is connected to the killing.

CBS said the fax it received threatened the network with extortion if a woman identified as Autumn Jackson Cosby "doesn't receive a fair settlement." The network carries the entertainer's show, "Cosby."

Meanwhile, the man police had hoped might help them solve the murder case was released after being questioned for eight hours. He had been surrounded by officers in a parking lot in suburban Torrance on Monday afternoon because his car was similar to

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