

entertainment

"Within Our Gates" Returns As Salute To Oscar Micheaux

CHICAGO (AP)— Seventy-two years after censors banned pioneer filmmaker Oscar Micheaux's "Within Our Gates," the sometimes violent, sometimes caustic look at black life has been shown without cuts in the city where it was made.

Micheaux, a native of rural southern Illinois, moved to New York after his run-in with the Chicago Board of Censors in 1920.

The movie he wrote, produced and directed was filmed in Chicago in 1919, the year of the city's worst race riots. The all-white censor board banned the 1920 premiere of the black filmmaker's second movie because it considered certain scenes too inflammatory.

Two scenes considered inflammatory depicted a lynching of a sharecropper family and a black Baptist pastor as a secret foe of racial progress.

"Micheaux went before the board with Ida B. Wells and other leaders of the black community and finally got permission to show the film, but only with 1,300 feet cut out of it," said Floyd Webb, program director and founder of the Blacklight Film Festival.

"The preachers were on his case just as much as the white power structure," Webb said.

The festival on Friday night presented an uncut version of "Within Our Gates" that was discovered in 1990 in Spain.

The subject matter of "Within Our Gates" was surprising for a movie made in 1919. It deals with literacy crusades, urban crime, alcoholism, rape and miscegenation.

In its shortened form, the movie played for months in Chicago, making enough money for Micheaux to continue his cinematic career. But he was barred from showing it in other parts of the nation and the film disappeared.

It was the first cinematic setback for the former railroad porter and farmer, whose first movie, "The Homesteader," was bankrolled by white South Dakota farmers.

Webb sees "Within Our Gates" as Micheaux's answer to D.W. Griffith's 1915 "Birth of a Nation," which glorified the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan makes no appearance in Micheaux's film, but it features a lynch mob of vicious, Mississippi townspeople. Members of the Southern aristocracy are depicted as money-grubbing dunkards not above raping a young black woman.

\$15,000. Budgets of up to \$1 million were the rule then in Hollywood.

Of 46 features Micheaux made between 1919 and 1946, fewer than a dozen are known to exist. Most are either what Webb calls "shuffle-along" musicals or melodramas such as the 1924 "Body And Soul," which introduced Paul Robeson to movies. He played a hypocritical preacher.

"Something happened to him after 'Within Our Gates,'" Webb said.

"The Homesteader" was a socially conscious movie, and so was this one, but his later works just aren't the same.

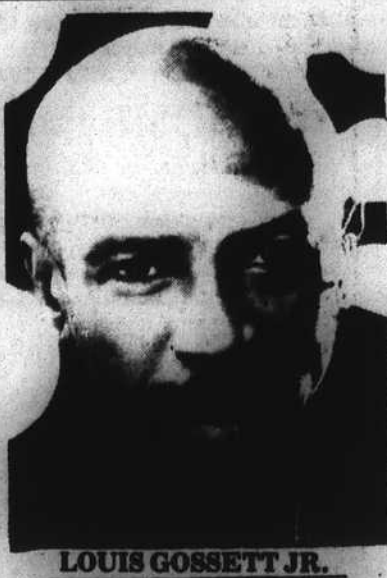
"Maybe he realized that the American people just weren't ready for propaganda—propaganda in the good sense, before the Nazis and Communists gave the word a bad meaning," he said.

Micheaux died in 1951. By then, a new generation of Black filmmakers had rediscovered his work, but only the later, studio-bound movies made in New Jersey.

In 1990, American film scholar Thomas Cripps was called to the Spanish Film Archive in Madrid to identify a mysterious silent movie found in its collection. Cripps identified it as the lost, uncut "Within Our Gates" and it was screened last year during a conference in California.

"Within Our Gates" deals with literacy, crusades, urban crime, alcoholism, rape and miscegenation as a caustic perspective of black life...

Most of Micheaux's later movies were shot in his apartment in Montclair, N.J., or in a small studio in nearby Fort Lee. He normally used a rented camera and produced his movies on budgets of \$10,000 to



LOUIS GOSSETT JR.

Gossett Blames Anger And Depressive Years On Racism In Industry

MALIBU, Calif. (AP)—The acting offers didn't come after Louis Gossett Jr. won an Oscar for the 1982 film "An Officer and a Gentleman." Anger and depression set in, and he blamed the lack of offers on racism.

"I went on a personal search, and I grabbed at everything I could to help me," Gossett said in a recent interview at his home. "The big mistake was thinking that I could find the answers outside myself."

"I bought a Rolls-Royce, I hung out with pretty women, I bought nice homes, went to the right church and studied with all the right gurus. But those were all outside things, and this was an inside job."

It's taken nearly a decade for Gossett, 55, to overcome the depression. He plays a boxer con man in the movie "Diggstown," which opens Friday.

"Resentment is self-destructive," he said. "Even if what you're resentful about is true, it'll only get worse if you carry it around."

"There was some subliminal racism involved in what happened to me, but it wasn't just racism. I think people thought I was too expensive after I won the Oscar."

"When that happens, they get to the second level, and the second level at the time was Danny Glover. When Danny got too expensive, they turned to Morgan Freeman. Now we're all expensive."

"I'll Fly Away" Bringing Civil Rights Era, Money As TV Series

MADISON, Ga. (AP)—Four times a month, this middle Georgia city goes back in time to the 1950s as the crew of the television series "I'll Fly Away" brings the civil rights era to life.

The series, just nominated for 15 Emmys, does more than bring excitement to these streets. It brings money—nearly \$200,000 in its first season last year.

"If it wasn't for these guys, during certain seasons we'd just have to close down and go home," said Rhonda Erwin, whose Washington Street Antiques shop supplies the show with period furniture and clothing. "It's great to watch the show and see something from our store in a scene."

"I'll Fly Away" is the story of racial and social politics in the fictional Southern town of Bryland. It focuses particularly on the relationship between a white district attorney, played by Sam Waterston, and his black housekeeper, played by Regina Taylor.

The show's producers chose Madison as the set for the series because of its historic look.

The carefully cultivated town, about 50 miles east of Atlanta, has numerous renovated historical houses and an old-fashioned downtown square complete with courthouse and shops that don't need a lot of camouflage to depict the 1950s. In fact, there are only two spotlights for camera crews to avoid filming.

Twice a week every other week, the series' stars and crew haul into Madison. They usually start filming on Wednesdays, when the stores close at noon and there's less traffic.

But townsfolk and tourists do gather to watch the taping. Alice Jean Zay sidled up to Waterston last week, blending into the crowd of extras until she got close enough to tell him how much she enjoyed the show.

"He's much younger looking in person," she said. "I'm fascinated by all they do to tape this television show here."

In addition to the money the series spends in town—on motels, food and supplies—fans spend too. A single episode brings about

\$8,600 to the town, said Henrietta Arnold of the Madison-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce.

"You wouldn't believe how many people come to visit Madison because they know 'I'll Fly Away' is taped here," she said.

"We're lucky to be shooting here," he said. "Being in the South, being in Madison contributes to the character of the show. We're also having a very good time here and that has a lot to do with us being here too."

The show has also provided some extra income to some local residents. They're often called on to be extras, forming street crowds or playing court spectators or store patrons.

Jim Puster, a graphic design artist from Macon, is the show's permanent extra—he was on 17 of last season's 21 shows, working 12- or 14-hour days for \$45 a day. He's been filmed so much that he's friends with the show's cameraman, who gave Puster a little extra footage the time he played a jury foreman.

Jay Leno Wants Hall End Feud

NEW YORK (AP)—Jay Leno says he wants peace between himself and rival television talk show host Arsenio Hall.

"What you have here appears to be two millionaires fighting it out," Leno told Entertainment Weekly magazine in its Aug. 14 issue.

"It's fine if it gets more people watching the show, but why throw rocks at each other?" he said.

In April, Hall told the magazine that he was "gonna kick Leno's ass."

"What is this attitude?" Leno asks. "He makes \$12 million a year. Are his monologues worth \$9 million a year more than mine?" Leno said he does not want the feud to continue.

"I haven't said anything nasty about him. I don't dislike him. I've liked him, although I realize now he's going to call me back."



NOT PROPERTY—Eddie Murphy, Hollywood's hottest property says movie reviewers who claim that "Boomerang" does not have enough white characters, are angry because it's too black, too beautiful and too strong.

Jazz Legend, Bill Russell Dead At 87

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Bill Russell, a jazz historian also known for recording early live jazz performances, died Sunday. He was 87.

Russell was hospitalized at Touro Infirmary on Saturday after slipping and breaking his hip, said Barry Martin, a friend.

The hospital did not release a cause of death.

Russell just completed a book on jazz legend Jelly Roll Morton several weeks ago, ending 30 years of work. It included interviews with Louis Armstrong and other jazz greats.

Russell also recently completed work on a re-issue on compact disc of 20 hours of music he recorded on his American Music label between 1942 and 1953, Martin said.

He was a composer, working in numerous styles, and a violinist at one time with the New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra, said Dick Allen, another New Orleans jazz historian.

But he was best known for his early recordings of live jazz on his American Music label, his encouragement of jazz musicians such as Bunk Johnson—a trumpet player who influenced Armstrong—and his collection of jazz history.

Born in Canton, Mo., in 1905, Russell first came to New Orleans about 1940 to record live performances of what was then "an underground music," Martin said.

Russell moved to the city in the late 1950s. He was co-founder and archivist for the jazz archives at Tulane University in 1958.

Russell lived in a French Quarter apartment and was a fixture at Preservation Hall, a tiny St. Peter Street club considered a last stronghold of unadulterated, traditional New Orleans jazz.

'Rappin' Granny' Reacts

CHICAGO Ill. (AP)—A Chicago grandmother's rappin' response to Ice-T's "Cop Killer" controversial heavy metal song apparently has struck a responsive chord.

"I've gotten phone calls from radio stations as far away as New York," said Dolores Dant, 64, who wrote and recorded "Granny's Rap" on a cassette recorder at her home.

Dant, who has two detectives in her family, mailed the cassette to the Illinois Fraternal Order of Police, and suddenly everyone wants to interview the Rappin' Granny.

"I was just letting off a little steam. I was just upset about somebody sitting down and writing about cop-killing. The majority of cops in America are good police," she said.

Dant is a retired secretary and part-time jazz singer. She says her son, Tilton Dant, is a detective in San Diego, and her son-in-law, Pat Collins, is a detective with the Illinois State Police.

But "Granny's Rap" is the beginning and end of Dant's recording career, she says.

"This is really wild. Never in a million years did I think there would be this kind of reaction. I think I'll stick to switchboards and computers. They're safer," she said.

Gumbel Breaks Wrist

NEW YORK, N.Y. (AP)—Bryant Gumbel broke his wrist while "in pursuit of a hippo" in Africa, an NBC spokeswoman said Tuesday.

Gumbel has been in Africa since last week, taping segments to use when the Today show originates there for six days, beginning Friday, Nov. 13.

But it was last Friday—not the 13th—that brought him bad luck, according to the spokeswoman, Lynn Appelbaum.

The crew arrived in Kenya after stops in Zimbabwe and Botswana.

As they chased a hippo at Masai Mara, a game reserve, the vehicle carrying Gumbel went into a ditch. He broke his wrist while trying to break his fall.

The wrist was taped and he continued to Egypt, sans cast, on Tuesday.

Appelbaum said she didn't know which wrist it was, or whether it would affect his golf game.

OFF THE WALL
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THE FIRST JANITORS' UNION CALLED FOR SWEEPING REFORMS

"Bebe's Kids" Takes Hilarious Act To Blacks In Film Venture

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Comic Robin Harris convulsed night club audiences with his routine about taking for pestiferous toddlers to an amusement park. Harris died at 36 in 1990, but his hilarious act live on in the new animated film "Bebe's Kids."

The Paramount Pictures release started promisingly with an opening weekend gross of \$3 million,

providing a \$4,661 average in 646 theaters. Quite an achievement for a film without big-names or an established story. What's more, it's the first full-length animated film by and about blacks.

Harris' routine was expanded into a script by Reginald Hudlin who directed Eddie Murphy in "Boomerang." Reginald and brother Warrington served as executive producers of "Bebe's

Kids." The director is Bruce Smith.

Smith shepherded the movie in record-breaking time at the Hyperion Studio in downtown Glendale, a few miles north of Los Angeles. The studio is a bare-bones operation occupying three floors of a renewed urban center. A tall, slender man in his early 30s, Smith talks calmly about what must have been a hectic experience.



MIXED PLANS—Mariah Carey and El DeBarge are singing stars with new plans, projects on the horizon. Carey whose self-titled debut album launched her into musical stardom



is discussing possible wedding plans. DeBarge is riding on the crest of his latest solo album, "Storm," and plans to record a gospel album for his next major project.