

CHAMBA

NOTES

A Film Newsletter

SUMMER 1979

The International Scene

According to AFRICAN NEWS (P.O. Box 3851; Durham, N.C. 27702) an excellent weekly newsletter, Mozambique's National Cinema Institute has initiated a traveling cinema program in the rural areas, begun organizing free children's matinees in urban areas and began an international campaign to change what is being shown in African theatres, namely garbage—Italian westerns, Indian musicals, European police suspense films.

In 1977, Mozambique hosted the First African Conference on Cinema with eight nations creating new structures to produce/distribute African films "reflecting African values." Last May/June, nine films billed as "The Cycle of African Cinema" toured all ten provincial capitals to capacity crowds and the project was featured in the Mozambican weekly TEMPO with a cover story "Decolonizing the Movies." Semben's CEDDO and XALA, Med Hondo's WE HAVE ALL OF DEATH FOR SLEEPING and Gerima's HARVEST: 3000 were among the films shown.

SISTER SHADOW is an Australian film about Aboriginal poet/writer Kath Walker. The 52-minute color made by non-Aboriginals features a portrait of her lifestyle, poetry, the cultural center where she teaches and the Aboriginal community. The film has a "harmony-through-nature/integrationist" cultural context that is similar to the American civil rights era but one sequence in which her radical son Denis Walker defies the police by entering a courthouse with a gun a la Huey Newton shows that the Aboriginal movement too has its stages. The Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in Oakland, Ca. gave Kath Walker the International Award last winter for her appearance in SHADOW SISTER. Contact Cinetel Productions Ltd.;

71-73 Chandos St.; Crows Nest NSW; Australia 2065 (see Special Report).

Last issue, I mentioned a new film about Jamaica entitled FORWARD TOGETHER. It can be obtained through the LATIN AMERICAN FILM PROJECT (P.O. Box 315; Franklin Lakes, N.J. 07417) and not the Neighborhood Film Project as stated.

There is another film out about Jamaica called LAND OF MY BIRTH that was made for Prime Minister Michael Manley's People's National Party by Saul Landau and shot by Haskell Wexler. The 30-minute color film deals with Manley's policy of "democratic socialism." Distribution info can be obtained (I think) through LAFP, too.

Filmmakers thinking internationally should be aware that Swahili has now been accepted by UNESCO as the 20th official international language. African nations have often suggested Swahili as the official Pan-African language.

THE DAMASCUS DOCUMENTARY FILM FESTIVAL took place during June in Syria sponsored by the Arab Documentary Union. Subject to the political pressures of the Mid East, the festival will alternate with the biannual Baghdad Film Festival in Iraq which premiered last year and screened only films about the Palestine issue. Because of the Arab boycott of Egypt film products due to its accord with Israel, and because of the decline of Lebanese production due to war bombings, Syria is expected to become a more active production center. Arab documentaries tend to be better made than current Arab features and in fact, are acquiring an international reputation primarily through the films of

Omar Amiralay (DAILY LIFE IN A SYRIAN VILLAGE, THE HENS) and Nabil Maleh (THE LEOPARD, THE PROGRESSIVE GENTLEMAN and PHOTOS).

There was an exceptional festival of "African feminist films" programmed by Pearl Bowser for Third World Newsreel (150 Fifth Ave., No. 911; NYC 10010; 212-243-2310) in June in NYC: Sarah Maldoror's SAMBIZANGA in which a wife's journey to find her arrested husband leads to self-growth and a revolutionary understanding of her life; Djibril Diop-Mambety's TOUKI BOUKI (the hit of the festival), a highly visual comic yet gently shocking tale of the encounters of a shepherd and a radical young woman; Sebastien Kamba's THE PRICE OF A UNION, the story of two clans that fight over a broken marriage contract which challenges the social structure of their society; Ababacar Samb-Makharam's KODU, the story of a girl who suffers a mental breakdown and after attempted cures through western medicine is cured through traditional rituals (get the message?). There were also several shorts shown. For distribution info, contact Pearl Bowser (P.O. Box U, Brooklyn, NY 11202; 212-UL-2-8353).

IAWO, the name given to the new priestess within the Orisha Cult, is the title of a film about survival of African religion in the New World under slavery. Shot in Brazil and focusing on the initiation of a group of women into the Orisha temple, the deeper examination of religion, ideology and their social meanings, especially Black resistance to oppression, is explored. Contact Latin American Film Project (P.O. Box 315, Franklin Lakes, N.J. 07417).

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CHAMBA NOTES, a Pan-African oriented quarterly newsletter that deals with all film activity, is available through subscription only. A check or money order (\$3 students/\$5 individuals/\$10 institutions) must accompany the order. The information within may be reprinted but must be attributed to CHAMBA NOTES as the source. CN welcomes any announcements, comments, questions or criticisms and we urge you to communicate with us. We'll send a free sample copy to anyone who requests it or anyone who is recommended by our readers.

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In the "Think Piece" Section there is a special report by Clyde Taylor on the Alternative Cinema Conference. As you read it, remember that plans are being made for a Black Independent Filmmakers Conference during the summer, 1980. The Third World Film Conference that was being planned by Gerima's Positive Productions has been postponed until after the BIF conference. You will receive mailed information about this important event.

Also, due to the overall increase in material, CN is raising its

subscription rates starting with the Winter 1980 issue. The new prices will be Students \$5; Individuals \$10; Institutions \$15. Those who subscribe before the Winter issue can get the old rates but all subscribers will get the CHAMBA FILM GUIDE AND READER free with a subscription order.

St. Clair Bourne,
Filmmaker/Publisher

EAST COAST, USA

Producer John Wise of Nafasi Productions, Inc. (850 7th Ave.; No. 705; NYC 10019; 212-LT-1-6470) reports that he was in Jamaica in production on a project tentatively titled ORISHA VUDU. He also received a NY State Council on the Arts grant for another film project, served as juror for the American Film Festival and completed several industrial films. More details next issue.

Former Brooklyn, NY activist Sonny Carson whose book was the basis of the film THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SONNY CARSON has acquired the distribution rights to the film and plans to self-distribute it commercially. In addition, Carson has contracted with Columbia Pictures to develop a script about the Attica Rebellion where he was an inmate during the rebellion.

SOUL CITY is a new short by M. Henry Jones distributed by American Federation of Arts (41 E. 65th St.; NYC 10021).

Kathy Collins has completed shooting a new film THE CRUZ BROTHERS AND MRS. MALLOY. The projected one-hour film was shot by Ronald Gray (TRANSMAG) and was written/directed by Collins based on the novel of the same name by Herbert Roth. Collins is currently editing and expects to have it ready for screening by September. Contact: Kathy Collins (796 Piermont Ave.; Piermont, NY 10968; 914-359-7978).

THE AFRO-AMERICAN TRADITION IN THE DECORATIVE ARTS is a new 12-minute color videotape

commissioned by the St. Louis Art Museum. Produced by Peter Wood and Richard Ward of North State Public Video in Chapel Hill, N.C., the tape deals with pottery, basketry, metalwork, woodcarving and quilting and was shown at the Museum continuously last spring as an introduction to a traveling exhibition on Afro-American arts. For more info, contact the St. Louis Art Museum; Forest Park; St. Louis, Mo. 63110, Attn; Richard Gaugert.

The Black Music Association has produced a new film BLACK MUSIC IN AMERICA: THE '70's. Basically a compilation film of stock footage, the film features most of the major Black entertainers in popular contemporary music including the Black Broadway shows. The 30-minute film is narrated by Isaac Hayes and Dionne Warwick, written by Orde Coombs, edited by Debra Moore, assisted by Karen Sweat and associate-produced by Naimah Fuller. Charles Hobson was a special consultant. The film is available through the Larning Corp. of America (Customer Service Dept. 1350 Ave. of the Americas; NYC 10019; 212-397-9360).

Speaking of Charles Hobson, he's finished the pilot for the Black music TV series FROM JUMP STREET with Oscar Brown, Jr. replacing Ashford and Simpson as hosts. He's now preparing to go into production for the remaining programs, and is seeking money for proper promotion when the series is completed—one of the major problems in producing TV shows with Black subject matter. Contact Hobson at WETA-TV (P.O. Box 2626, Washington, DC 20013; 202-998-2600).

Dr. Oakley Holmes, producer of the BLACK ARTISTS IN AMERICA film series featuring major contemporary Black artists, has a new address. Write for catalog at 809 Ninth Street; Jacksonville, Ala. 36265.

BLACK ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION (BET) is establishing a specialized network by which it will exhibit Black television programming that it acquires to cable TV subscribers across the country via satellite. BET is interested in licensing Black programming (film and tape) for exhibition on an advertiser-supported basis. BET is particularly interested in entertainment-type programming, including docu-drama rather than educational or politically-oriented programming. However, BET would like to see such material if it can fit into BET's programming standards. Any filmmaker with "Black product" for which you hold the distribution rights, contact Bob Johnson at BET (3544 Brandywine St, N.W.; Washington, DC 20008; 202-457-6776).

Oliver Franklin reports that the first traveling BLACK FILMS/BLACK FILMMAKERS series was very successful with Warrington Hudlin, Haile Gerima, Charles Burnett and Carol M. Lawrence participating on tour in Philadelphia, Boston, Milwaukee, Minneapolis and Seattle. Franklin is now looking for filmmakers to participate in next year's tour to be held in five Black museums around the country. Filmmakers must have at least 60 minutes of film time. Interested filmmakers should contact Oliver Franklin (The Afro-American Historical/Cultural Museum; 7th and Arch St.; Philadelphia, Pa. 19106). Also, write for an excellent poster and program notes with interviews of this year's tour.

UPDATE: INDEPENDENTS FILE SUITE AGAINST ABC, NBC & CBS
by Joel Levitch

On February 14, ABC, NBC and CBS responded formally to the anti-trust charges which were filed against them last September. This suit, alleging restraint of trade and monopolization of news and public affairs programming on U.S. television, is essentially an attempt to break the long-standing network "policy" of refusing to deal with independent producers of news and public affairs programming.

As expected, the networks moved to dismiss the case on a number of grounds, some quite technical in nature. In this first round, they were not required to affirm or deny the policy, merely to show that even if all our allegations about it were true, our case would still fail on the merits. For instance, they argued, among other things: that any company has the right to make and distribute its own product; that we have not shown that the parallel behavior of all three networks in this regard is a result of conspiratorial behavior; that we have not shown that the networks "combine" with their affiliations to deny a market to independent producers; and that since there are three networks, no one of them has a large enough share of the market to qualify as a monopolist.

By far the most extensive arguments presented by the networks were designed to prove that, above all else, it would be a violation of their First Amendment privilege for the government (i.e. the Court) to force access of any kind by an outside group—even when antitrust violations are alleged.

We believe at this point that our counter-arguments, which will be presented soon by our attorney, Eric Lieberman, will prevail, and therefore that the suit will not be dismissed. A victory at this stage means the case would proceed to trial, but not for at least a year and quite possibly longer.

Ultimately, if antitrust violations are proven, I believe all of commercial broadcasting would eventually be opened to the independent producer seeking a market for news/public affairs type programming. At the national level, the Court would have wide latitude to provide a remedy for proven violations, up to and including an outright ban on network internal production of any news/public affairs documentary or magazine program. At the local level, a ruling in our favor could easily open the door for similar suits against commercial stations which refuse to deal with independents.

A new Black producer group has popped up: in addition to the somewhat dormant BLACK PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION (62 Hamilton Terrace, NYC 10031), THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACK TELEVISION PRODUCERS (P.O. Box 771; NYC 10009) was organized in Washington, D.C. in September 1978 and is geared to improve working conditions for Blacks in TV. They publish a newsletter PRODUCER with president Curtis Rodgers as Editor. Write for the newsletter. It's full of information. NABTP also plans a directory of Blacks in TV and has regional chapters in the Midwest, Southwest, East, New England, Southeast, Mountain and West.

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Henry Hampton's BLACKSIDE, Inc. is rushing to complete their two-hour TV special on the civil rights era called AMERICA, THEY LOVED YOU MADLY. Despite the strange title, the film promises to be an important documentary since civil rights vets from SNCC journalist Charles Cobb and researcher/Associate Producer Judy Richardson are preparing the basic material. Lou Potter, back from Europe, is writing the script. The film is scheduled to air over the Capital Cities Corp. stations in the early fall. Contact BLACKSIDE (145 Dartmouth St.; Boston, Mass. 02116; 617-536-6900).

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The Black Filmmaker Foundation headed by Warrington Hudlin collaborated with the NYC Cultural Affairs Dept. to sponsor a program of independent films through a mobile "Film-mobile" in all five boroughs and 59 community districts within NYC. Featured among the films shown were DOING AS YOU PLEASE (Kwame Olatunji), an experimental short combining music, live action, animation, double exposure and sounds created by drawing right on the sound track; Roy Campanella's PASS/FAIL; Ed Sprigg's EUPHEUS, a documentary portrait of a Black church service; Hugh Thompson's GET A JOB and other independent Black works. For information, film list sources, contact Steve Dobi-Film/TV Program; Dept. of Cultural Affairs-NYC; 830 Fifth Ave.; NYC 10021, Attn: Filmmobile.

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MINORITIES IN BROADCASTING is a film that examines the aspirations and problems of Blacks in the electronic news field. Produced by a group of Black newsmen at station KING in Seattle (Bill Dorsey, Luther Avery, Andy Reynolds and John

Raye) in 1974, it serves as a "how to" film for those interested in entering the mainstream corporate electronic news field but also points out the problems. John Raye, now working with the U.S. Census Dept. to publicize and encourage Black participation in the upcoming 1980 census, spearheaded the film project while a TV newsman at KING-TV. For distribution information, contact: John Raye (9805 Bettiker Lane; Rockville, Md. 20854; 301-762-9145) or Peter D'Amelio (North Media Associates; 158 Thomas St.; Seattle, Wa. 99203).

I urge all Black filmmakers to participate in the BLACK FILMMAKER COOPERATIVE DISTRIBUTION SERVICE—a concept that is sorely needed. BFCDS is designed to assist in self-distribution of Black films by publicizing them and making them available from a single source. Based on the principles of cooperative advertising and self-distribution, the primary tool is a catalog to be distributed to all film users, both traditional and non-traditional. A shipping company has been contracted to store, clean, ship and invoice the prints of Co-op members. *The rentals will be paid directly to the filmmaker, not to the BFCDS and the filmmaker is responsible for keeping his own records. This allows him/her to monitor how and where his films are being shown and to retain full legal and financial control over his work. Participation in BFCDS is not exclusive and does not prevent your films from distribution through other means.* Plans are being made for European TV distribution, traveling film shows on regular circuits and speaking engagements so it's in your interest to hook up. Write The Black Filmmaker Cooperative Distribution Service (P.O. Box 315; Franklin Lakes, N.J. 07417) for information, forms and if you already have them, send them in immediately. Production on the catalog begins in the fall.

Announcer Rob Crocker, formerly of WRVR-FM has formed RCP Productions (50 Duke Ellington Blvd.; NYC 10025; 212-662-2193). He's producing music programs for Amtrak and Swissair. As RCP's first TV project, he's negotiating with Canadian Broadcasting Corp. to co-produce a jazz TV show for syndication.

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More about video artist Philip Malory Jones. . . In addition to BLACK AND WHITE AND MARRIED, a color videotape, Philip and wife Gunilla have also produced THE TROUBLE I'VE

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SEEN, a documentary about rural Black Georgia; NO CRYSTAL STAIR about Black music and dance; BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS, MORE MOUNTAINS made in Haiti in 1975; IN THE PICTURE, about Marcia Pally, a gay professional dancer/choreographer—all videotape productions. Jones is co-founder and Director of Ithaca Video Projects, an independent media center which provides instruction and access to equipment (328 E. State St.; Ithaca, NY 14850; 607-272-1596). ■

WEST COAST, USA

Alex Haley is re-writing his TV pilot for a series based on his growing up in Hennings, Tennessee to be co-produced by his company and Norman Lear's Tandem Productions. Haley is recruiting Black writers and technicians to be involved in the production. Contact The Kinte Corp. (1801 Ave. of the Stars; L.A., Ca. 90067; 213-553-8940).

Presently, the only Hollywood Black-oriented feature film project is FAMILY AFFAIR written by Richard Pryor. Pryor (naturally) stars in the film and Cicely Tyson is the co-star. More significant than the script is the producing staff with East-Coasters Bill Greaves and David Franklin (Pryor's deal-making lawyer) sharing the Executive Producer duties, Pryor as Producer (assisted by a white Line Producer) and Oz Scott (the director of FOR COLORED GIRLS...) as Director. They're scheduled to begin shooting in Seattle, Washington in September. More info in CN's next issue.

Cinematographer-turned-Director Robert Wagoner has directed the new Rudy Ray Moore film DISCO GOD-FATHER which is being released in the Midwest in late August. Wagoner, a producer of the political '60's (BLACK JOURNAL and many independent documentaries), has attempted to interweave social/political content in the form of anti-angel dust messages into Moore's usual comedy, a trend that Moore's next film will continue.

Cliff Rocquemore, Moore's film producer, is negotiating with writer Ron Milner (WINE SELLERS, JAZZ SET, WHO'S GOT HIS OWN, etc.) to write the next script in an attempt to upgrade Moore's film career. In addition, Rocquemore is talking to Glyn Turman to become involved in both the acting and producing levels.

Ron Milner is scripting the TV pilot for Michael Schultz's Crystalite Productions (6233 Hollywood Blvd., L.A. Ca. 90028; 213-467-9106). The plot deals with a Black-owned TV station.

Craig Rice was part of the production team that made a special TV film WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN aired this summer over ABC in L.A. The 45-minute film documented the L.A. school busing experience by focusing on several different families involved in the exchange and was produced by the Cinema/TV Dept. of University of Southern California. Contact Craig Rice (1020 S. New Hampshire Ave., No. 2, L.A., Ca. 90006, 213-464-8381 or 387-8505) for distribution info.

SPECIAL REPORT

The Aboriginal people and their movement against the European invaders (the same people who invaded North America killing the Native Americans) is the subject of several films that have not been seen in America.

Bobbi Sykes, the Aboriginal film/videomaker/activist has now been joined in documenting this struggle by Essie Coffey whose new 50-minute film MY SURVIVAL AS AN ABORIGINAL deals with past and present survival tactics on their land. Directed by Coffey with a white film crew, SURVIVAL shows the history of Coffey's tribe the Murrowarri, life on the reserve (called reservations in America) and white life in the nearby town. TJINTU PAKANI (SUNRISE AWAKENING), a film by Ande Evan-Maddox (an Afro-American currently living in California—1704 West Blvd.; L.A., Ca. 90019) explores Aboriginal self-discovery through theatre in Sidney, Australia. ROBIN CAMPBELL—OLD FELLER NOW, written by Campbell and directed by non-Aboriginal Alec Morgan, describes through dramatic recreations Campbell's early life as a boy on the land, as a drover in the '40's and his current days on the reserve.

BACKROADS describes the frustrations of Gary, an Aboriginal trying to make it in white society and a climatic act of revenge. ULURU is a videofilm that portrays a series of Aboriginal legends narrated by an Aboriginal guide. FLOATING shows the realities of daily life on an Aboriginal mission after 200 years of European oppression. The film appears tragic but there are elements of survival strength; for example, after missionaries "resettled" the Worora tribe, they renamed themselves the Mowanjum community which in the Worora language means "We will not move again."

PROTECTED is a dramatized documentary which describes Aboriginal life on Palm Island during the 1950's and the strike of 1957 toward self-determination on a tribal basis. WE STOP HERE features the Dyirbal tribal elders re-

telling the massacres, poisonings, struggles, round up and removal of their tribe to the Palm Island reserve in the 1950's. NINGLA A-NA describes the establishment of the Aboriginal Embassy in front of the Australian Parliament House (similar to the Afro-American Poor Peoples Campaign in the early '70's) and portrays the growing Black consciousness in urban Australia among Aboriginals.

MICK AND THE MOON is a study of an Aboriginal painter and his social struggle to ensure that his ancient art form survives. A CALENDAR OF DREAMINGS, and LALAI DREAMTIME are films that deal with the mythological aspects of Aboriginal tribal life, focusing on the break in continuity when they were torn away from their original lands (much like Africans taken from Africa to America). ABORIGINAL FAMILY EDUCATION records the video project at Fedfern in Sidney, Australia in which mothers videotaped their children's activities. The film focuses on the differences between Black and white in cultural values. THE SONS OF NAMATJIRA examines the Namatjira family whose sons live through the sale of their art and the generation gap between them and their father. MALBANGKA COUNTRY is about a tribe who leaves the reserve to return to their tribal homeland.

One gets the feeling that most of the films mentioned suffer from the "outsider-looking-in" syndrome distortion (with the exception of Coffey's SURVIVAL and Campbell's ROBIN CAMPBELL) but because we know so little about the situation there, any images help spread information... even Australian feature films like JIMMY BLACKSMITH and THE LAST WAVE, although they're probably rip-offs of Aboriginal legends/stories.

For distribution information, write to Claudine Thoridnet, a French woman who heads the Adelaide Film Festival (GPO Box 354; Adelaide, South Australia 5001; tel. 08-212-3671).

THE "THINK PIECE" SECTION

INTERVIEW: TONY BATTEN

As you read my conversation/interview with producer/director/writer Tony Batten, you can feel the sense of struggle in his words . . . and you should. Batten has been many places—he's produced documentaries for ABC Network CLOSEUP series, helped create and executive-produced/hosted the innovative series INTERFACE over PBS, produced films for both BLACK JOURNAL and THE 51st STATE series, was a producer/reporter for CBS News and is currently Executive Producer for "F.Y.I.," the PBS news/public affairs news documentary series based at WETA in Washington, D.C. (P.O. Box 2626, Washington D.C. 20013; 202-998-2600).

CN: Do you think that the format that's used in American contemporary television documentaries, that is, the stand-up commentator, the interruption of the commercials every twenty minutes, to what extent does that subvert the cinematic message?

TB: Well, that's a constraint. That's a constraint like granite, you know; granite has a certain kind of resistance to the sculptor. Wood, plaster of Paris, collage, paper, all have resistances to the sculptor. The art world, getting the work shown, is another kind of resistance to the artist. The way you have to hang a painting or the way you have to place a sculpture, or the way you have to penetrate the gallery market or the museum market or the television market are synonymous with the restraints and constraints that you have to do if you're perceiving that as keeping your hands on the stock.

CN: So you really don't see it as a barrier so much as another part of the process of making the film.

TB: Another part of the process of making the film, or another part of the process of making the film seen, or making what your statement is clear.

CN: Most of the work that people know you for is stuff that you've done while on staff for some television show, but you've also done some independent stuff.

TB: Very rarely, because I can't afford to do it. The time it takes to go get the money to do something independently I can be using to make a film, and I see it that way. I prefer to struggle to make a film that says something, rather than struggle to get the money to make a film that says something.

CN: Did you always think that, or is that a process of trial and error?

TB: I just always felt that way because it seemed to me that the artistic skills in getting the money to make a project were different from the skills that I had. I was not a salesman, and I couldn't really pry loose money from people in order to get them to let me do my thing. What I could do was let certain agencies or certain entities or certain television stations know that I would be able to do either reports for them or documentaries for them, or I could even work as a journalist for them. But what it meant was that every single time that I was able to work with a cameraman, work with an editor, and whether or not I could make my own while project or not, I could always

work within the process of cinema, because the language remains the same. So I use them and their money and their time in order to enhance my own skills.

CN: Do you have any ambitions outside of structured TV?

TB: No, not as a director. I do as a writer, because the way I see dramatic films being done, and things outside of television, they really are organizational kinds of pieces of work that have to be done within the context of a certain kind of money deliniation, and a certain attention to selling stuff to an audience.

CN: I am assuming you're talking about feature film production.

TB: Right, studio or on location or any of those, it doesn't really matter; I mean the very least that you're going to have to do is be a kind of straw boss for fifteen or twenty people. I don't like to make films that way; I like to make films with five or six people.

CN: I have this feeling that for the past twenty years, the American audience has been hit with pretty much the same type of news documentary on television. To what extent has the constant exposure of the same format reduced the effectiveness on the audiences?

TB: I just would not want to work within the context of a Hollywood kind of way of doing films, and that's not to really denigrate the quality so much because I think the quality of Hollywood films is really exemplary, and you can really make something look good, but you really can't tell the truth, and that's because it just can't be told in that context.

CN: Is this a major dilemma in your work?

TB: Yeah, it's a dilemma, and it's like you can polish the piece of shit as much as want to, but it's still a piece of shit. It's a dilemma, a basic dilemma of the country, so if I see myself as an American communicator, that's the dilemma that I have to deal with, particularly as a Black one.

My work gets better. I mean, they can't win finally, because my work gets better. I can say that, I can deliniate that problem, I can point that out to my peers and colleagues and brothers, clearer and clearer each time. And for me, that's important.

CN: So where you do that, and the format in which you do that is not that important, it's just what you do, however you handle it.

TB: That's right. As long as I don't get knocked off. And you know, it's very frustrating, sure, because I would like to have the stuff that I did shown in theaters, I would like to get money, I would like to get the status, I would like to be in that world.

CN: Can you talk about some of the things you have planned for the future?

TB: I would like to do a television show about jazz. I have a play that I've been writing, that has been optioned and is supposed to go into production, and I'm doing some rewrites on it. It's about some gamblers in the '30's. That's mostly my concentration, I would like to get out of news and public affairs and into—I don't really know what to call

it—but I guess I'd like to get into writing screenplays and plays.

CN: You're saying essentially you think you've stretched American television out to the extent that you think you can do it, do you think that you can go beyond that?

TB: No, not at all. Now I'd like to have more fun at what I'm doing, and I'd also like to make more money at what I'm doing. Somebody said a couple of weeks ago to me, "Why are you so dour, why are you like that all the time," and I said, "Well, if you've covered the Black community and you've covered death for twenty years, you couldn't really smile all the time." I really don't want to cover death any more. And I'm not necessarily equating the Black community with death, but what I am saying is that the political struggle that's gone on is one that you can either put yourself on a continual need to struggle with an implacable force. I want to do that in a different way, I don't really want to do that in a way that doesn't survive.

CN: Martyrdom is not healthy.

TB: Martyrdom is not healthy, and I really deserve, just as all Black people deserve, a portion of what this society has to offer. Now, it is unfortunate and it is a real tragedy that most of what this society has to offer is hemlock, but if that society is denying me a portion of that simply because of the way that I function, I'm going to get a portion of my own hemlock. Now, I will do whatever I can to help those coming after me to make the hemlock honey, but I want to determine how I'm going to drink my own hemlock.

CN: How do you see internationalization? You are one of the few Blacks who have been able to make films outside of the country, and bring them back here to show. So having had that experience, do you think that is a way to go, to help define the problem, or is it really an American problem?

TB: That's a lot of questions. First of all, it's not just an American problem, it's an international problem, but it's an international problem of color and then race, then class. In terms of film, I think there could be an international collaboration, but before there could be an international collaboration there would have to be an international economic base among those groups of people, that's the only way those things are done. There is some in socialist countries, but not anywhere near as much as anyone would imagine, so as a group of people who are exploited, the only way that we could possibly make those kinds of economic bases would be to make some sort of alliance with one or the other. But in terms of Black Americans doing something like that, they don't really do that, they don't try to do that, they're not internationally oriented, what they're oriented toward is Hollywood. What you're talking about in that question is an orientation of those people who have the skills to penetrate that market to be consistently concerned with international concerns. That's an enormous job in this society.

CN: And you have to do that under the hammer.

TB: Under the hammer, and it's interesting, all those people, I mean all of those people that you would think about in the American society who would really have an access and could really manipulate film in some way, know something about socialism, know something about the Left, come through that, but I mean, Lonnie Elder, Billy Dee, Sidney... can't. They are committed to this way of life.

CN: So where are we? International or not?

TB: It seems to me that maybe Black and Third World American filmmakers ought to be identifying themselves with that. I don't know why more Black American filmmakers don't go to... an example, the Polish school of filmmaking is so heavy, why don't they go over there, they know they would be welcomed by Poland. Why don't they

go to Cuba and make these films, why don't these Black Americans as exiled filmmakers—now see, that concept wouldn't have been all that strange in the '30's, the '20's or something.

CN: The painters and musicians did that.

TB: Precisely. Now if the filmmakers said, "I can't make it here"—Bill Greaves is the last guy, really, who did that; he went to Canada. But from him beyond like, until Melvin van Peebles—but then he's come back here to grapple with the main money trip.

CN: He jumps between New York and L.A.

TB: The point is that at a certain moment, even someone as skillful and thoughtful as Melvin is, he realizes that the people he really wants to share what he's going through is an audience that is really going to appreciate that. That is not a Nigerian in Paris, that is not a Senegalese in Brussels, that is an American Woogie right here in New York, or in Washington, or wherever. So you gotta penetrate that market. That's the real tragedy of the American filmmaker in a funny kind of way, and it's the tragedy of the American artist who's Black in this society, forever.

In CN's fall 1979 issue the "Think Piece" section will feature a conversation with the most innovative film artist of the 20th century—Melvin van Peebles. We'll talk about his opinions of the past decade and his plans for the future.

THE U.S. CONFERENCE FOR ALTERNATIVE CINEMA

A Special Report by Clyde Taylor

Except for the slightly progressive tilt of its participants, the Alternative Cinema Conference held at Bard College, New York, June 12-17, precisely reflected and re-echoed American society, 1979. That was the conference's principal weakness—its claim to interest, and ultimately its main value.

From the beginning, the organizing committee (hereafter, O.C.) made every classic move for alienating Blacks: dealing with them as invisible men, defining their place for them, making insidious judgments about their politics, patronizing them as "minorities," and asking them to serve as window-dressing and tokens. Facing a barrage of criticism from Black and other film activists, the O.C. shuffled and re-shuffled to correct their mistakes, only to make larger ones. Of the five Blacks appointed to an advisory panel, designed to increase representativeness, three didn't show at the conference itself, and two, Belvi Rooks and Haile Gerima, withdrew from the panel in frustration.

The question became, for most Blacks, to stay away or go. St. Clair Bourne, in *Chamba Notes*, announced his intention to stay home. Marc Weiss, coordinator for the O.C., made zealous last minute efforts to enlarge Black participation. A small contingent of Blacks finally did go, roughly 30. Some hadn't heard about the pre-conference hassles. Others had, but came with the intent to salvage some useful organizing, without legitimizing the official conference hierarchy. On the eve of the conference, the O.C. was eager to make concessions and yield some control. "At this point," admitted Marc Weiss, "the O.C. is like a feather in the wind."

In his keynote address, Robert Van Lierop commended the O.C. for its hard work, addressed the limited Third World participation and analyzed some of the reasons for it, and attacked the tribalization that the O.C. had structured into the event. In his assertion for unity, Van Lierop illustrated the interdependence of all progressive movements. "Let's not be deceived," he urged, "by the strategy of throwing out a few crumbs. Let's raise our demands so high that we are united by the scope of those demands."

The question whether Van Lierop had himself salvaged or legitimized by his presence and presentation was soon eclipsed by the subsequent efforts of the Black and Third World caucuses, which definitely salvaged, not only the possibilities outlined in his speech, but also the productive opportunities of the conference for Third World people, and in a way, the conference itself.

Once the uninformed were hipped by the pre-informed, the Black caucus, with Bernard Nicholas, L.A. filmmaker as spokesman, got its stuff together and took care of business in a manner superior to anything of the like I saw in the '60s. Folks got together on time, wasted few words, discussed and took positions, surmounted egos, accepted and completed assignments on time and in effect, came together as a unified organism for hammering out a thrustful movement for independent Black cinema at the conference, and beyond.

The Third World caucus, co-chaired by Lillian Jimenez (Foundation of Independent Film and Video) and Martella Wilson (African Film Society), was a model of multi-interest coalitioning for effective change. This caucus included at least one Iranian, several Asian Americans, but no Native Americans, who sat out the conference completely. Several caucus and plenary sessions were effectively chaired by Jesus Trevino (Chicano Coalition), who functioned as Hispanic spokesman.

The Third World caucus played a major role in restructuring the remainder of the conference. The new O.C., now expanded to include reps from several caucuses agreed to a series of plenaries devoted to Third World, feminist, gay and lesbian perspectives. It was later agreed that all workshops would be augmented by Third World and gay panelists.

The first of these new plenaries, the Third World session, was climatic. It was here that the conference as a whole first learned in some detail of the pre-conference alienation of Third World people. After reading caucus position papers, the caucus presented its definitive position paper (see box).

The position paper dealt with the question of legitimization by declaring the conference development to have been permeated with institutional racism, and by insisting that this paper be included in all conference reports. Marc Weiss rose to one microphone and argued that the charge of permeating racism was too sweeping in its language, and asked for more specific language. Martella Wilson rose to another microphone and pinpointed some of the abuses of the conference planning. "You rejected one Black filmmaker as keynote speaker because, you said, he was a Pan Africanist." (Ed. note: the "Pan Africanist" filmmaker rejected as keynote speaker was St. Clair Bourne.) Audible groans. As she went on, Weiss crumpled to a seat.

The evening became even more heated after Ralph Torres (Third World Newsreel), the only non-white on the original O.C., asserted that Black filmmakers should give themselves some self-criticism for not cooperating with the O.C. and for not attending in greater numbers. He was warmly refuted by several members of the Black caucus. The point was made, among others, that Black filmmakers had no obligation to work with a conference that did not provide for their interests. This one rift in the Third World caucus was fully healed when another Puerto Rican criticized Ralph's action and he accepted that criticism with an open admission of his error in timing and strategy.

From this point on, exchanges between the various "tribes" rapidly multiplied, in number and sincerity. It was through this process that virtually everyone at the conference had their perspectives widened to include the activities, interests and personalities of other sectors of the alternative cinema scene. An overwhelming sentiment of unity

emerged from this process.

The principal beneficiaries of the opening of the conference structure by the Third World caucus were the gays and lesbians. These groups drew on the racial-cultural precedents in Third World struggles (as opposed to its socio-economic dimensions), in urging their life-style politics. In their plenaries, folks came tearfully out of the closet, re-lived identity crises, recounted parental rejections and re-asserted the relevance of their life-style struggles to social change movements. Many in the assembly were moved and enlightened by these soul sessions, accepting the right to sexual preference, without being convinced of its centrality to progressive politics.

It should be understood that aside from these dramatic plenaries, workshops went on, dealing with various aspects of production, distribution and use. Networking and information-gathering approached overload. And in another plenary, chaired by executive director Jennifer Lawson, the Film Fund came under heavy criticism for its fund-granting policies and procedures.

The conference closed on the 17th, after a raft of resolutions were passed. Plans and structures were set up for future organizing.

What did it all mean? Was it merely a feel-good session? The Black caucus was clear-eyed on this point. Though it woofed when it had to, it did so reluctantly, knowing that assertions of identity had to come behind concrete strengthening of independent Black cinema. Many said that the conference was like repeating the '60s, with all the pluses and minuses that implies. But the Black caucus demonstrated what may be the best of the Black politics of the '80's. Composed of a wide range of political and cultural persuasions, it "struggled through" questions of ideology and strategy to find the common denominator of progressive change, always mindful of the demands of accountability. More important, individuals from the caucus moved fluently from contexts of Black solidarity to Third World coalitioning to multiracial interactions without any loss of purpose or integrity. In other words, it was mature, and it was political, not ego-tripped or cultist.

Both the Black and Third World caucuses are determined to carry their drive for effective change into post-conference activities. Both have placed representatives on the Coordinating Committee of the conference, which will meet in New York in November, to coordinate future activity, including Regional Caucuses and consideration of another conference in two years.

An immediate effort of the Third World caucus is to enlist interest among Third World filmmakers who were not at the conference in the Regional Caucus meetings following up the meeting at Bard. Regional meetings have in fact already started, with over 100 people in attendance in New York, 70 in L.A. and 90 in San Francisco.

High on the agenda of these Regional Caucus meetings is the conference resolution for at least 50% of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's national production funds to be earmarked for independent producers. The CPB is also being pressured to implement the recommendations of its Task Force on Minorities in Public Broadcasting, outlined in its recent report, "A Formula for Change." But other agenda items will be developed and pursued through a process democratic enough to encourage non-conference participants to take full part.

Considering that the original goals of the conference were "the breaking out of the tremendous isolation" besetting the progressive film movement and the exploration of the potential for unified action, the conference was, with no small thanks to its Third World participants, saved from the disaster it might have been to achieve a promising success.

A some-people-never-learn footnote—the Marxist Education Collective scheduled a panel on July 11, covering some of the issues taken up at the recent Alternative Cinema Conference, "including the participation of filmmakers in community, labor and Third World struggles." The panelists—Ruth McCormick, Paul Schneider, Deborah Shaffer, Greta Schiller and Marc Weiss—were all participants in the conference, but not one was Third World.

Clyde Taylor, a S.F.-based writer/critic, is a founder and Organization Coordinator of the African Film Society (P.O. Box 31469; S.F., Ca. 94131; 415-922-8183) and a frequent contributor to national publications on cultural trends.

THIRD WORLD CAUCUS POSITION PAPER TO THE ALTERNATIVE CINEMA CONFERENCE

June 14, 1979

The Third World Caucus of the Alternative Cinema Conference has reviewed the process and composition of the Alternative Cinema Conference and has concluded that the same institutional racism that we encounter daily in the larger society has unfortunately permeated the process of the conference development. While we recognize the importance of the event and commend the organizing committee for their vision, we find that the planning process has reflected a lack of accountability to Third World people, reflects inherent racism and limits the possibility for fullest mutual exchange.

Among the concerns of each ethnic group relative to the weaknesses of the Conference organizing are:

1. Outreach was inadequate and reflected the isolation of the conference organizing committee from the Third World community. A case in point is the fact that there is no Native American representation at the conference. Representation by Asians, Blacks, Chicanos and Puerto Ricans and other oppressed Third World groups is not representative of the key filmmakers and media workers in those communities.

2. The structure of the conference, its plenary, workshop and discussion sessions do not adequately reflect Third World issues, concerns and priorities.

3. The character and tone of the conference does not aggressively address the issue of racism and class in the larger society and in particular in media work.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That a plenary be established to deal with the relationship of Third World filmmaking to the non-Third World filmmaking.

2. That additional Third World representatives be added as co-workshop moderators to workshops without such representation.

3. That on the Coordinating Committee the regional representatives should reflect the Third World make-up of each region.

4. That the Alternative Cinema Conference send a mailogram to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting demanding immediate implementation of the Minority Task Force report.

5. That the Alternative Cinema Conference support the creation of training programs, funding for Third World media programs, and employment.

6. That the Alternative Cinema Conference, as a group and within each respective organization, actively support Third World liberation struggles.

7. That the Conference incorporate this statement by the Third World Caucus in all published material of conference proceedings.

FILM REVIEW

A DREAM IS WHAT YOU WAKE UP FROM Directed by Larry Bullard and Carolyn Y. Johnson

Third World Newsreel's new production, *A DREAM IS WHAT YOU WAKE UP FROM*, probes, prods and provokes while posing some very definitive questions on the Black family in America. The film explores male and female roles across generation ties and class lines, in an interesting and compelling surge of dialogue punctuated by historical reference (slavery) and elements of the day to day struggle to deal or not to deal, with the roles society proscribes. What is ostensibly a structure for dialogue between the sexes, weaves in and out of the family setting, a conference on Black women, a rap over coolade between two working class women, a nursery school, to a group of men in a dialogue about the film they have just seen. This structural element of the film-within-the-film, creates a filmic space that imposes a distance between the audience and the exploding tensions to allow the viewer another perspective of the families within the film. A historical perspective of slavery and exploitation, woven into *A DREAM*... suggests that the roles played out in the Black family today, are rooted in that earlier struggle.

A DREAM... juxtaposes two sharply drawn Black families, one middle class, one working class, examining their aspirations and realities against the subtler presence of racism and exploitation shaping the roles they play. The film within the film draws a group of men into a rap about control and male identity, emotion and male identity and the economic pressures which define and shape their interaction with Black women. While not every viewer will agree with the root causes of Black man/woman conflict and role playing that the film suggests, the dialogue with the middle class and working class families speaks to and questions the viewer on a number of vital issues confronting the Black family in America. As Walter, the insurance broker, speaks of his "goals" and his need to have a plan, one wonders how aware he is of the compromises he has already made to secure his American dream. What will be his awakening? Are his goals worth the sacrifices and what real values will his children inherit? When the family counseling agency pursues its inane line of questioning, in an attempt to extract a "promise" from the working class woman, "not to nag" so that her husband will stop abusing her physically, one wonders how effective are the instruments for problem-solving within our community. This scene was staged by two actors pretending to be a couple in trouble, but the councilors thought they were real. The agency would not allow the crew to film their sessions without written permission from the clients. The reality of the facts presented in this scene is "brought home" by the final sequences (unstaged) in the film at the nursery school, as the children reveal in their games, the roles their parents act out every day. Through their drawings and story telling, the children reveal the anger and physical abuse that sometimes erupts at home.

A DREAM... attempts to analyze elements within the Black family, politically. It makes a strong statement about misplaced values and sexual politics. While it does not say it all, it stands alone as a superb effort to deal with some compelling questions confronting the Black family.

A DREAM IS WHAT YOU WAKE UP FROM is distributed by Third World Newsreel (150 Fifth Ave., No. 911; NYC 10010; 212-243-2310).

Pearl Bowser is a film historian, programmer and Director of Chamba Educational Film Services. ■

WEST COAST

Continued from page 4

Bernie Rollins of Chocolate Chip Productions has completed directing his first independent feature film, a love story/musical called **GETTING OVER** that features an all-women group of singer/dancers **The Love Machine**. The film is now in editing. Meanwhile, his partner Leroy Robinson is checking the final prints for his series of three educational scripted films that he (Robinson) directed. Contact Chocolate Chip (6515 Sunset Blvd.; L.A., Ca. 90027; 213-465-4512/28).

Actor/director Bill Duke completed his first year at the American Film Institute and is planning his film project to be done there next year. Contact Bill Duke (511 S. Mariposa St., L.A., Ca. 90020).

Tom Eubank of Videotapeworks, Inc. (5724 Santa Monica Blvd., L.A., Ca. 90038; 213-464-5891) has purchased a new videotape camera set-up and is looking for co-producers for several new projects. Having the equipment is half the battle and Eubank's got it.

Television For All Children (TVAC) is a production/distribution organization headed by Nate Long. Originally set up to distribute government-subsidized educational film series (like **VEGETABLE SOUP**, **INFINITY FACTORY** and the planned **UP AND COMING**) over both public and commercial stations, TVAC has branched out from its Hollywood base to branch offices in Washington, Atlanta, Chicago and Detroit and is funded through a HEW grant. One of its big sellers was **SOUTH BY NORTHWEST**, a series made in 1974 which described Blacks settling efforts in the Northwest, which aired over 75 stations. Five new episodes are being produced by Long (who produced the original series) and Esther Rolle, Bernie Casey, Denise Nicholas, Thalmus Rasulala, Vonetta McGee, Johnny Rae McGhee and Gracie Lee have been signed to appear in **SOUTH BY NORTHWEST**, **SECOND TIME AROUND**. The new episodes move the storyline to 1919 from the original 1841-1890 era. Contact Nate Long at TVAC (6430 Sunset Blvd.; L.A., Ca. 90038; 213-463-7060).

Writer Pamela Douglas has completed writing several projects: a script for the WGBH children's arts education TV series **THE WAREHOUSE GANG**, another for TVAC's **SOUTH BY**

NORTHWEST TV series, a commissioned script for a Broadway play **STREETS**, a movie-for-TV script **FRIENDS** in development and numerous magazine articles (Black California lifestyle/religious cults for **ESSENCE**). Contact Pamela Douglas (P.O. Box 386, L.A., Ca. 90028; 213-274-2843).

Topper Carew received \$1.2 million dollars to produce 26 episodes of an educational situation comedy called **THE RIGHTEOUS APPLES**. Based on the adventures of an interracial teen rock band, the show deliberately is patterned in format after the Lear-type TV shows and in fact, Carew got Lear to "god-father" the pilot production by using Lear's crews and production facilities. Time will tell whether that format (especially that format of writing) will conflict or not with the "educational elements" to be contained in the series, but in my opinion it doesn't work in the pilot. It's like looking at a regular Lear show...and those shows haven't been kind to Black images. Contact Topper Carew at Rainbow TV Workshop (6430 Sunset Blvd., No. 320; L.A., Ca. 90028; 213-466-1697).

Brockman Gallery Productions held its sixth Annual Film Festival featuring films from Latin America and surrounding islands. However, the Chicano Cinema Coalition criticized the festival for its lack of Chicano films. Brockman and Jorge Preloran's **THE GREEN WALL**, about the Peruvian jungle; Antonio Eguino's **CHUQUIAGO**; Helen Solberg-Ladd's **THE DOUBLE DAY** about Latin American women; Nelson Pereira Dos Santos' **VIDAS SECAS** and Hector Olivera's **REBELLION IN PATAGONIA** were some of the films shown. Contact Alonzo Davis at Brockman Gallery for program notes and film sources (4334 Degnan Blvd.; L.A., Ca. 90043; 213-294-3766).

The Chicano Cinema Coalition screened **THE BATTLE OF CHILE** for a benefit. Check out their newsletter for an extensive filmography of Chicano films. Contact CCC (P.O. Box 32004; L.A., Ca. 90032).

Carol M. Lawrence of Nguzo Saba Films, Inc. (1002 Clayton St.; S.F., Ca. 94117; 415-731-7336) screened her film **BONES** at the American Film Institute who put up part of the production money.

East Coast writer completed two scripts for Avon Kirkland's TV series **UP AND COMING** now scheduled to begin production around December/January. Contact Kirkland at KQED-TV (500 8th St., S.F., Ca. 94103).

There's a report of a Black student work based on Gayle Jones' novel **EVA'S MAN** that showed at UCLA's Women's Film Festival this summer. The drama is a flashback showing a woman's rage against her own impotence and sexual dependency culminating in violence with Louis Johnson in the title role. The film is directed by Anita Addison and I'll try to get distribution information for the next issue.

The Liberty Hill Foundation (P.O. Box 1074; Venice, Ca. 90291; 213-396-8988) is holding a day-long workshop **REEL IMPACT: HOW TO USE FILMS** on October 13 in the L.A. area. Film users should get in touch.

Jesus Trevino's **RAICES DE SNAGRE** opened commercially to favorable reviews and strong community support. Trevino's political feature film deals with the "exploitation of the illegal alien" subject matter. There will be a full review of this important film next issue. Contact Trevino through the Chicano Cinema Coalition (see address above).

The African Film Society (P.O. Box 31469, S.F., Ca. 94131; 415-922-8183) held its 3rd annual Film Festival with an extremely creative program of films with themes that changed daily: **One Struggle, Many Fronts**; **Consciousness and Change**; **International Year of the Child**; **Youth—Ready or Not**; **The Workers**; **Third World Health**, **Struggles For Liberation**; **Invaded Land**; **Black Family Relationships**. For program notes, and their new issues of their newsletter **UPDATE**, contact AFS.

Michael Schultz attended the Moscow Film Festival in August and showed **CAR WASH** which, by the way, is a big favorite in Europe because, I was told, few American films show working class Black people.

Larry Clark, now residing in Berkeley, Ca., also went to Moscow to screen his **PASSING THRU** at the festival. ■