



Hollywood Happenings

Don Mitchell has made his much-heralded entrance into television and his image, as predicted, is certainly different from any other black actor currently in a regular role on the tube.

IN THE SPACE of one month he appeared in "The Virginian" as a killer and member of a gang headed by Charlie Bronson; in a segment of "Insight" as a jobless Harlemit who walked out on his wife; as an African leader in a "Tarzan" episode who's shown to be a coward in the end; and in his regular role as a social dropout-almost-turned-good in the "Ironside" series.

It's not a Sidney Poitier or Greg Morris or Bill Cosby type image, to be sure. But what about the real Don Mitchell? How does the flesh and blood person stack up to the celluloid counterpart?

The answer is simple: There are two Don Mitchells; each quite distinct, yet thoroughly compatible with the other.

The first is the bright, young Texan who left Houston as a teenager and journeyed to Los Angeles, where he entered Los Angeles City College and became an All-City basketball player. Trophies he won are still on display there.

THIS IS THE same Don who enjoys strong, warm family ties with his sister, June, a German and French teacher back home, and his grandmother, Mrs. Annette Thompson, whom he calls "Shorty."

But it is the other Don Mitchell who spawned the character captured on TV screens; the quietly cynical, suavely "cool," grass roots oriented and no nonsense young black man.

It was the other Don who set out hopping trains across-country and gained the experience, insight and just plain hard knocks and point blank realities which became fodder for the TV image he so realistically enacts.

Don had just finished his first play, a lead role in "The Blacks," with Ivan Dixon, James Edwards, Joel Fluellen and Bob Doqui, when Doqui told him of the acting opportunities in New York.

Genuinely excited, Don filled a duffle bag with what clothes he had, copies of novels by James Baldwin and Richard Wright, plays by Leroi Jones, a five dollar bill, and climbed aboard an East-bound freight.

ONCE IN New York, he decided to keep going all the way to London and study at the London Academy, but he was offered a role in another production of "The Blacks" with James Earl Jones, Lou Gossett, Cicily Tyson, Roscoe Lee Brown, Raymond St. Jacques and Bobby Dean Hooks ("N.Y.P.D." co-star who was Don's roommate in N.Y.).

"Of that group," recalls Don, "everyone has made it pretty well. Lou has been doing TV roles recently, Bobby got the role in 'N.Y.P.D.', and Cicily, Ray and Roscoe appeared with the Burtons recently in 'The Comedians'."

Despite the fact that Don was acting, his room and board in N.Y. were slightly less than plush. In fact, states Don, "I had some of the finest addresses in the city, but the truth was that I was sleeping on the roofs of these fabulous places."

He also slept in subways and later roomed with both Lou Gossett and Bobby Hooks. But this kind of living got old fast and Don was soon on another freight headed back to the coast.

BACK IN L.A., the dry heat and smog moved Don to arch his thumb again and take to the highway in the direction of Houston. It wasn't long before a white man picked him up and tried to talk him into spending the night with him in a trailer camp.

"But I managed to get out of the car," says Mitchell, "and ran into the woods along the highway. I stayed off the road and kept out of

NEW TV SEASON'S MOST DYNAMIC DUO



ON THE MOVE--Raymond Burr and Don Mitchell prepare to move out on another case in this scene from the new "Ironside" series. (See Hollywood Happenings)

"SHADES" OF JUSTICE

NEW ORLEANS - (NPI)--Edgar Labat and Clifton A. Poret, who have been in jail on a rape charge for 14 years, before being released by a federal court and rearrested by local authorities on the same charge, must now face court again on Oct. 23.

The case has gained international attention. A Norwegian newspaper sponsored a fund for the aid of the two imprisoned men.

A Swedish woman wrote letters to Labat but local authorities refused to let the man have these letters saying that a Negro had no right to receive comfort or letters from any white woman anywhere. They claimed to be acting under Louisiana law in refusing permission for the letter exchange.

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sight. Later, I saw the same car--this time with four hooded men inside with shotguns--searching for me. I slept in the woods that night."

When he finally arrived in Houston, tired and weak, Don dared not mention his ordeal for fear of frightening his family. Instead, he rested and took off again for N.Y.--on a freight, of course.

Hopping from one train to another is a rough experience any way you look at it and Don was quick to find this out. He saw the severed bodies of hobos on the railroad tracks where they'd either fallen drunkenly asleep or simply laid down to end it all.

He frequently saw the remains of tramps' bodies being eaten by hungry dogs and vultures. Occasionally he slept and ate with these transients, "just to see where they were and what they were about."

He once fell off a train while sleeping and nearly froze in the Rocky Mountains.

"BUT DESPITE all this," reflects Don, "the traveling was great. Of course, I didn't have any money, but it didn't matter. I learned a lot from the many kinds of people I met and it all contributed to the Don Mitchell people see on the screen. All these experiences helped prepare me for acting."

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