



Hollywood Happenings

TO A YOUNG boy born in Watts, Hollywood is another world millions of miles away--despite the fact that it's actually only right across town from the Los Angeles ghetto. Certainly, when young Jimmie Sherman passed time with childhood buddies on Watts street corners, he hadn't the slightest idea he'd eventually be hired as a motion picture screen writer by the largest movie-making concern in the world, Universal City Studios.

But that's exactly what's happened.

For 23-year-old Jimmie Sherman, this new position is only the most recent of a series of exciting events in the young writer's blossoming career. It has only come about as the result of his youthful exuberance coupled with indisputable talent and an absolute refusal to take "no" for an answer.

According to Jimmie, his "career" actually began following the historic Watts Revolt. Like many young black men, he was intensely concerned over the fact that newspaper and television accounts of what had happened gave only a superficial and sensational account of the situation.

He wanted desperately to shout the truth; to tell the country and the world what the revolution in the ghetto was really about. Unlike most black youngsters, however, he channeled his emotional frustrations into a brilliant play, "A Ballad From Watts," which he managed to present, despite astounding odds, at a local Elks Hall.

FOR ACTORS, he brought together a group of equally enthusiastic, though totally inexperienced, local citizens. Their performances were hailed unanimously by the press. Some of these people--including Sonora McKeller, Paris Earl and Ruford Nicholson--have gone on to become accomplished legitimate actors and actresses.

Jimmie and his associates were also among the original members of the famed Watts Writers' Workshop, a group which has grown both qualitatively and quantitatively into an organization of national and international stature.

(Ed. note: It's interesting to note that writer Louise Meriwether, who made Hollywood history by becoming the first black story analyst in the movie industry, resigned her position recently to divide her time between writing a novel ("Daddy Was A Numbers Runner") and contributing to the Watts Writers' Workshop.)

When Mike Ludmer, head of Universal's story department, first approached Jimmie about the position, the young writer didn't really think he'd get the job. "I wasn't so naive as not to know how hard it had been for a 'brother' to get hired as a writer in Hollywood," says Sherman.

THE ONLY black writer to be hired by a major studio up to that time was Harry Dolan and he, too, was from the Watts group.

The writers' group is still very much a part of Sherman's life and he speaks of it with open pride: "When we first started, we didn't dream of eventually publishing an anthology ("From The Ashes") or of seeing our work in the Antioch Review. We were just some frustrated black writers who got together to exchange and put down ideas."

The talented young man has also written and co-directed a film, "Johnny Gigs Out," about a black trumpet player (played by Paris Earl) in Watts who is struggling to become an entertainer, but is killed by a policeman.

"The fact that we have a few black writers now is good," opines Jimmie, "but we've got to get Negroes in every phase of movie making, especially producing. We can't rely on 'the man' to produce what we want to--and must--say on the screen."

Actor Greets Studio's New Screen Writer



WELCOMING COMMITTEE -- Actor Clint Eastwood Welcomes Jimmie Sherman to Universal Studios on the set of Eastwood's new movie, "Coogan's Bluff." Sherman has been hired by Universal as a screen writer.

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By NEGRO PRESS INTERNATIONAL

PLAYBOY STAR

CHICAGO - (NPI)--Swinging singer Damita Jo was a big success at the Playboy Club during a limited engagement which ended last week. A naturally talented performer, Miss Damita is especially adept at improvising upon song tunes.

GLOOMY END

BUDAPEST, Hungary - (NPI)--The overtones of the old song hit "Gloomy Sunday" were carried to an ironic, sad conclusion last week, when Rezso Seres, Hungarian author of the dirge-like tune, committed suicide at the age of 69. The song, introduced in English in America by Paul Robeson and popularly recorded by the late Billie (Lady Day) Holiday, was blamed for touching off a wave of suicides during the 1930s (depression) period.

CONCERT STAR

CLEVELAND - (NPI) -- Actor-comic Bill Cosby will take time out from his "I Spy" television role to star Sunday, Jan. 29, in a concert at the Music Hall. Cosby is "Scotty" in the dual lead with actor Robert Culp in the television show.

KUP'S FRIENDS

CHICAGO - (NPI)--Chicago Sun-Times newspaper columnist Irv Kupcinct, better known to his readers as just plain "Kup," was honored with a banquet marking his 25 years as a columnist, and among his many friends attending were several Negro celebrities. Two were former Olympic track stars Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalfe, whose friendship with "Kup" dates back to the days when the columnist was a sports writer. Owens is now a disc jockey; Metcalfe, a Chicago city councilman from the 3rd Ward.

FORMAT CHANGE

HOLLYWOOD - (NPI)--Advance announcements of the fifth annual "Hollywood Stars of Tomorrow Awards," scheduled for telecast in color over the ABC-television network, Saturday, Jan. 27, tell of "significant format changes to broaden the scope of the show." Chief of among the change is the appearance of a Negro beauty, Monica Peterson, among the semi-finalists for the talent award program.

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