

ENTERTAINMENT

Rock busy traversing star circuit

By Rick Wilson

Special to Sentinel-Voice

ROCK THIS — Chris Rock is busy. Very busy. He's either on the road touring to support his new CD, prepping a return to his HBO talk show, shooting commercials, writing a new book, working in the recording studio, hosting the MTV Video Music Awards, visiting Oprah Winfrey ... you get the idea.

About the only time Rock's not busy is when he actually gets a chance to sleep for a few hours.

When ignited, this burst of activity can be traced to his tour-de-force 1996 HBO special, "Bring The Pain." In its review, the *Daily Variety* remarked that "Like (Richard) Pryor, and even Lenny Bruce, Rock is an update of the comedians who supplied a clear mirror made all the more relevant through raw language and images."

"Bring The Pain" recently won two Emmy Awards in the following categories: Outstanding Variety, Music or Comedy Special and Outstanding Writing for a Variety or Music Program.

"Bring The Pain" has also seen life beyond HBO — Dreamworks Records released both home video last December as well as a CD in April entitled "Roll With The New." In addition, the first single and video, "Champagne," has just been released and is in heavy rotation on MTV and other music video networks and radio stations, the special was a follow-up to Rock's 1994 Cable Ace Award-winning HBO special, "Chris Rock: Big Ass Jokes." The *New York Post* called that special "utterly anti-PC and utterly fearless," with the *Hollywood Reporter* adding, "Big Ass Jokes Is Big Ass Funny."

Chris' self-titled late night, half-hour series on HBO returned to the air-waves in September with 13 new episodes. In its review of "The Chris Rock Show," the *New York Times* said, "Chris Rock shouldn't be missed," adding, "Chris Rock is probably the funniest and smartest comedian working today."

This month, Hyperion releases "ROCK THIS!" a hilarious, no-holds-barred look at everything from race to relationships to politics. In 1996, Rock served as the sole presidential campaign correspondent for Comedy Central's acclaimed "Politically Incorrect," logging humorous and sometimes sardonic reports from the trail of the primaries, to both the Democratic and Republican Conventions, through to election night eve. This provided a forum for Rock to convey his observations and insight in what shaped up to be a memorable election year indeed.



Chris Rock holds two of his prized statuettes at the 49th Annual Primetime Emmy Awards, where he received the awards for outstanding writing and outstanding comedy special for "Chris Rock: Bring The Pain."

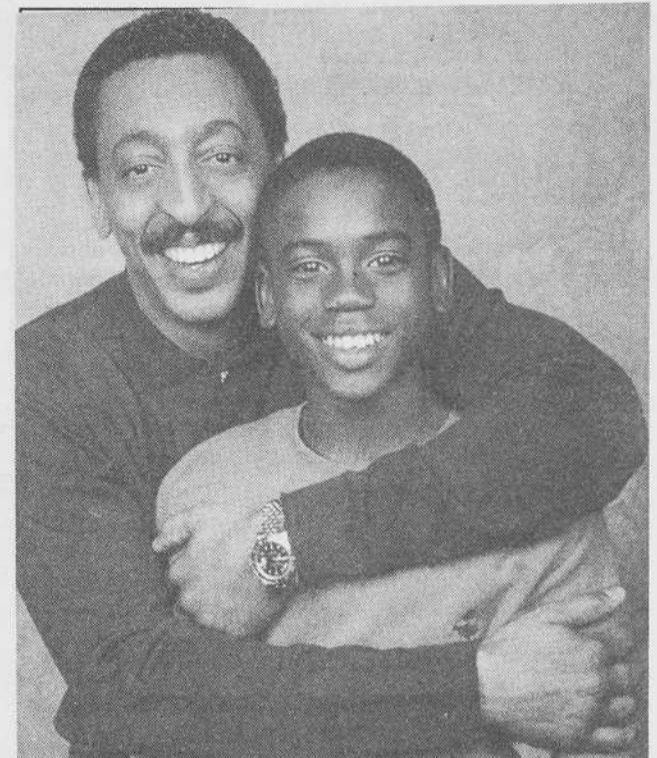
If that voice you hear in the current campaign for Nike of "Little Penny Hardaway" sounds familiar, it's because it's Rock's. Besides lending his voice to the hugely popular commercials featuring Orlando Magic super-star Penny Hardaway, Rock also wrote "Little Penny" portions of them with more commercials continually being shot because of the phenomenal response. In addition, Rock continues to serve as spokesman for 1-800-COLLECT.

Rock grew up in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. He had two idols: boxer Sugar Ray Leonard and actor Eddie Murphy. He realized early in life the career for which he was headed. Says Rock, "Can't fight, so..."

Rock on President Bill Clinton: "I also like Clinton because he really needs the job. He needs the money. Why? Clinton's got real problems. He doesn't have president problems. He's got real problems just like you and me. He's running out of money. His wife's a pain in the ass. All of his friends are going to jail. I can relate to Clinton. I know Clinton. I am Clinton!"

Rock on food shopping: "There's nothing fresh in a black supermarket, unless you count 'fresh from the can.' There's no red meat. The meat is brown. And if you do get some red meat, you better cook it that day because it's gonna be spoiled tomorrow. You'll wake up and locusts will be having a conversation on the meat — and all because you wanted to shop black."

Rock on relationships: "Humans aren't too good at monogamy. Make that male humans. Here's the bottom line: once you commit, you can't cheat. Wanna cheat. Dying to cheat. Can't cheat. Can't wait to cheat. Can't cheat. Some folks got go to rehab not to cheat. Some folks cheat in rehab. Here's why you can't cheat: your woman will lose her mind and in some cases she will actually try to kill you."



Gregory Hines stars with Brandon Hammond on his new show: "The Gregory Hines Show."

Gregory Hines: Well worth the wait

By Sally Stone

Special to Sentinel-Voice

For Gregory Hines, the idea of starring in a weekly series was not exactly one of his "must-do's" in life.

The multi-talented actor/singer/dance/musician and Emmy and Tony Award winner could probably work for a long lifetime to come just on the offers currently on his agent's desk. But it wasn't the availability of work outside of television that made him reluctant to take on the responsibilities of helming a series.

As the Brooklyn-born Hines says, "It's flattering to be asked, but, frankly, I could never do something I wasn't proud of. And, unfortunately, there have been too many examples of shows on television in which African-American males are not seen as characters, but as caricatures."

Then, along came the premise for what would become this season's "The Gregory Hines Show" on CBS, and as Hines said, "When they told me about Ben Stevenson, the character they wanted me to play, and about the show, I felt this was a man I'd be proud to know, and, therefore, proud to play."

The series is about Stevenson, a widowed book editor, and his 12-year-old son, Matty, played by Brandon Hammond. The story picks up some 18 months after Stevenson's wife has died, and his son and his friends start encouraging him to get back into

(See Hines, Page 16)

Black women confined in media cage

By Norman Solomon

Special to Sentinel-Voice

(IPS) — In medaland, some people have every right to be angry. So we see affluent white guys on television all the time, expounding views forcefully, letting us all know what they like — and what makes them mad.

Black women are another matter entirely. Sure, they're visible on quite a few commercials. And MTV's music videos don't lack for stereotyped black babes dancing to hot tunes. But African-American females have little chance to speak out about their daily lives and deepest concerns.

It's still conspicuous when a Black woman gets the microphone to talk about what matters to her. And it's rarer still for major media to provide a substantial amount of time and space for Black women to talk about the combination of racism, sexism and economic disadvantage that they face in this society.

In sharp contrast, vehemence from white men isn't just acceptable — it's

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valued if it lets us in on authoritative outlooks. Strong statements of opinion, uttered with commanding presence in mainstream media outlets, are routine for the punditocracy. Bombastic TV programs like "The Capital Gang" and "The McLaughlin Group" showcase men who vent their biases, often denigrating Black people and women in the process.

While the rage of white males is part of the media landscape, the rage of Black women — who have plenty to be angry about — gets cut off at the media pass. That's why it's especially meaningful that journalist Jill Nelson is now doing an end run around the usual blockade.

When I interviewed Nelson halfway through a month-long national tour for her new book "Straight, No Chaser," she was in the midst of burning up the radio waves across the country, helping to force key issues into the open.

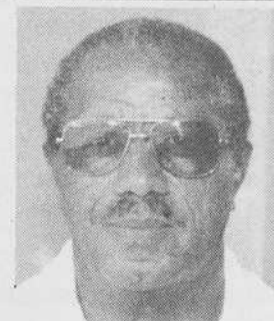
Subtitled "How I Became a Grown-up Black Woman," the book insists that silence — far from being golden — is corrosive. Urging that the unhealthy quiet be shattered, Nelson follows her own advice by mincing no words:

• "The culture that we consume through television, magazines, and advertisements confirms our lack of importance." Black women "are totally absent from all serious political discussion. Even during February, Black History Month, Black men are the preferred race representatives. March, Women's History Month, is for white women only."

• "Entertainment? Forget it. Even though black Americans watch more free network television than anyone else, there is not a single dramatic show on television about black women, much less a black woman producing one."

• "When it comes to beauty, the preoccupation of women's magazines and women's programming, we are definitely not up to snuff. We're too dark, big-
(See Analysis, Page 16)

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