

Victim's family wants to spike 'Sam' movie

Special to Sentinel-Voice

NEW YORK — Spike Lee's plan to make a movie about serial killer Son of Sam has gotten a thumbs-down from the father of one of the victims.

Michael Lauria is urging the filmmaker to drop the "Summer of Sam" project. Lauria's daughter Donna was Son of Sam's first victim in 1976.

"I can't believe that anyone would make a movie about the Son of Sam," Lauria told the Daily News. "He admitted to killing my daughter."

David Berkowitz, who called himself Son of Sam, killed six people in random shootings from the summer of 1976 to July 1977. Seven others were wounded in the attacks that terrorized New York City. Berkowitz is serving six consecutive 25 years-to-life terms in state prison.

Lee is scheduled to film scenes in a Bronx neighborhood not far from where Lauria's daughter was shot, among other New York locales.

"Only a heartless person would come into this area and shoot a movie about the Son of Sam," said Lauria, who joined members of the advocacy group Parents of Murdered Children on Saturday in a protest outside a casting call for movie extras.

Lee, whose films include "Do The Right Thing," "Malcolm X" and "He Got



SPIKE LEE

Game," did not attend the casting call. Al Valentine, location manager for the film, said the filming would go on as planned, although Lee was sensitive to the protesters' concerns and has ordered his crews to stay away from actual murder sites.

Valentine said the film wasn't focused on Berkowitz, instead dealing with a group of youths who severely beat a man they mistakenly thought was the killer.

"They think it's the Berkowitz story; it's not," Valentine said.

The nickname "Son of Sam" came from a note Berkowitz left at one of the shooting scenes, which read in part, "I am a monster. I am the Son of Sam."

Police finally captured him by tracing a parking ticket issued near the scene of one of the murders.

Bombing

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Mississippi Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who is also helping the Advocate with its investigation, said they have heard nothing from the lead investigator in the case, ATF agent Michael McDuffy.

There are also numerous other unanswered questions:

- Why did the U.S. Department of Justice not officially classify or investigate the bombing of the Advocate as a hate crime?
- How does the acting arson chief know so many explicit details about the bombing, including that the first of two Molotov cocktails thrown into the Advocate went out?
- Why did FBI special agent Jim Frier suddenly retire in the middle of the case and why did the FBI tell Clarion Ledger publisher Duane McCallister that Advocate owner Charles Tisdale had been given a lie-detector test?
- Why didn't Vernon Hughes secure the crime scene at the Advocate until several days after the firebombing?
- Why hasn't the FBI been inside the Advocate to help collect evidence at the crime scene?
- Why is a local acting arson chief the lead investigator in

charge of a criminal case involving a bombing, instead of a federal agency such as the FBI or ATF?

- Why has no official motive or suspect been publicly identified in the months since the Advocate bombing?
- Which FBI and ATF agents interviewed the person who reported the fire, Kim Palmer? And why did they continue asking her the same questions during several inadmissible polygraph tests?
- What happened to the surveillance tape from the federal building camera which was trained on the Advocate offices?
- Why did Vernon Hughes say on local TV on May 26 that "Mr. Tisdale is still a suspect," even though he and other officials were aware that a May 11 letter from the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District in Mississippi had exonerated Tisdale and why did a Jan. 8, 1998 letter from FBI agent Frier not resolve the role of Tony Hodges in the salon bombing?
- Why did a black police official tell Charles Tisdale and SCLC's Stephanie Parker Weaver within 72 hours of the bombing that suspects had been identified, "but they did not want to make an arrest because the alleged suspect(s) didn't have a motive for wanting to destroy the Advocate?"

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Bridgewater

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jazz because it's the most exhilarating, the most liberating musical form. I think that that is what's going to interest these young kids: when they see the artists themselves really getting into it and enjoying it. Number one, it piques their interest. Then they're more inclined to go check out somebody else. It just starts you thinking about what it is you want to do.

Savoy: Did your mom and dad play a lot of jazz at home when you were growing up? You came of age during the 60's when the Motown sound was what was going on, and if you wanted to be heard and have opportunities, you had to do that.

Bridgewater: I did that, and the Marvelettes lived one street over from me in Flint. But my father was a trumpet player. He taught music in Memphis, so it was always in the house, and my mother listened to a lot of different singers, one of which was Ella Fitzgerald and another was Sarah Bond, so I guess from my listening when she was pregnant with me, singing jazz was always innate for me. I never studied, I don't read music, it's just the way it comes out, the way I hear it.

Savoy: Do you feel you're fulfilling what you were destined to be?

Bridgewater: One could say that.

Savoy: Do you have children?

Bridgewater: I have 3 children: a daughter who is 25 and lives in L.A., a daughter who's 20 and lives between New York City and Paris and is singing, and a son, 6.

Savoy: Do you try to interest them in becoming entertainers?

Bridgewater: No. No, I want my children to do what they want to do. My oldest daughter is a talent coordinator (See Bridgewater, Page 20)

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