



ASK DEANNA! Real People, Real Advice

Ask Deanna! Is an advice column known for it's fearless approach to reality based subjects

Dear Deanna!

I'm a female that has a problem with the girly stuff. I'm not gay or anything like that, I just prefer to wear men's clothing and sports gear. People judge me, call me a lesbian and hurt my feelings because I want to be comfortable and just be myself. I can't take it anymore and want it to stop.

Andrea W.
Leesville, LA

Dear Andrea:

Just like wearing hoochie clothes, you set yourself up for unwanted attention through your wardrobe. If your feelings are hurt, obviously this mistreatment bothers you. You're not as comfortable being in boys underwear as you pretend to be. Stop trying to be a Jack and go back to being Jill. If you want the harassment to stop, toss out the boxers, buy a thong and be the female you were born to be.

Dear Deanna!

My friend and I go to the club every weekend. Because I ride with her, she expects me to buy gas and when we get to the club, she wants me to pay her entry fee and buy drinks. I barely have enough left to pay my cover charge so, I sit at a table all night and can't have a good time because I don't have any money left.

Drained Dry
Charlotte, NC

Dear Drained:

If you can buy alcohol, you can fill up your gas tank and take yourself to the club. Ask your friend to ride with you and make her spend some money for a change. If she gets angry or develops an attitude, she's not a true friend. You are being used as a one-way ticket to a good time. Leave her dry on the curb and turn up the volume as you head to the dance floor.

Dear Deanna!

Help me with this dilemma. I'm starting a new friendship and want to know if you kiss on the first date, does that make you seem easy? I'm going out for the first time with a guy I really like and I don't want the smooch rules to mess things up.

Janice
Phoenix, AZ

Dear Janice:

Forget easy, if you've never dated him before, you shouldn't be thinking about putting your lips on his body. You don't know if he's infected, has tart breath, diseases or what. The time when kissing should occur is when it feels right for both people and after you've gotten to know each other. Don't get yourself embarrassed by trying to plan the kiss, if it's meant to be it'll happen.

Ask Deanna is written by Deanna M. Write Ask Deanna! via Email: askdeanna1@yahoo.com or 264 S. LaCienega Blvd. Suite 1283 Beverly Hills, CA, 90211. Website: www.askdeanna.com

Lackawanna Blues: Film trip worth it

By Stan Washington
Special to Sentinel-Voice

ATLANTA (NNPA)—The VIP Atlanta premiere of HBO Film's Lackawanna Blues at the Woodruff Arts Center was one of those special evenings in the arts that are becoming more common place than not in Atlanta.

On hand for the premiere was S. Epatha Merkerson, who plays the lead role of Rachel "Nanny" Crosby, a woman with a big generous heart. Also present to support Merkerson was her "brothers" in the arts, Charles "Roc" Dutton and Carl Gordon (who played Roc's father.) They performed the previous night in a special program in connection with the opening of the Romare Bearden exhibition at the High Museum of Art. After the film, the audience was treated to an appropriate and fabulous soul-food reception. It was a fitting end to a film that featured soul food all through it.

Adapted from the critically acclaimed, off-Broadway, autobiographical one-man show by Ruben Santiago-Hudson, the film took many in the predominantly Black audience back to their old neighborhood — a place often rich with love and characters.

It was also a place before desegregation, a place where Santiago-Hudson grew up in Lackawanna, N.Y. The community was thriving then like a lot Black communities were before African-Americans were allowed to spend their dollars downtown and in the suburbs.

"When we talk about the segregation years," director George C. Wolfe said in a previous interview, "some think of them from the perspective of victimization, of Jim Crow laws, of dogs and hoses and the Klan. And not to minimize that, it was terrible. But people didn't just stand around and sing 'Go Down Moses.' They built communities. And a whole culture sprang up from that."

Many of those communities had a Rachel "Nanny" Crosby, a woman with a big generous heart who ran a boarding house. She had a calling for "fixing people" — giving them a second chance.

A little boy called Junior was one of those receiving a second chance. Like Junior says in his narration, Nanny helped so many people that she was like the government.

Far removed from her role as Lt. Anita Van Buren on the hit television drama "Law & Order," S. Epatha Merkerson doesn't just portray Nanny, she is Nanny.

But Merkerson isn't the only one who nails her part; you would be hard pressed to find one weak performance from a stellar cast which included Marcus Carl Franklin, Mos Def, Macy Gray, Hill Harper, Terrence Howard, Ernie Hudson, Delroy Lindo, Rosie Perez, Ruben Santiago-Hudson, Liev Schreiber, Henry Simmons, Jimmy Smits, Patricia Wettig, Micahel Kenneth Williams, Charlayne Woodard and Jeffrey Wright.

During the reception, Merkerson and producer Shelby Stone took some time to answer a few questions about the film. The remaining air date is March 5.

Q: Working with that kind of talent, including director George C. Wolfe, I'm assuming it was one of your most enjoyable working experiences.

Merkerson: Absolutely. This experience would certainly fall into the top ten. One of the others would be the "Piano Lesson" with Charles Dutton and Carl Gordon who are here tonight.

Q: How did the part come to you?

Merkerson: The old fashion way — I auditioned. I had seen the one man show, and Rueben told me at that the time that he was making it into a screen play, and HBO had purchased it, and we should stay in touch. And when the auditioned processed started. I was called in.

Q: Are there many meaty roles like that coming your way?

Merkerson: You know if someone like Meryl Streep is on the screen like once every four years, Epatha Merkerson doesn't stand a chance. But I think that's why this role is important because it deals with a woman who is above 50 and it is rare that a female actor finds a starring role like that at all.

Q: So what's next for you?

Merkerson: I'll finish the season ("Law & Order") at the end of April, and in May I start rehearsals for a new play in New York called "Birdie Blue."

Q: Was it hard assembling that great cast?

Shelby Stone: No, for two reasons: One, you had this beautiful, extraordinary

screenplay that Rueben Santiago-Hudson wrote. And second, you had the amazing, phenomenal George C. Wolfe. (This was Wolfe's, an award winning theater director, film directing debut). His track record is unparalleled. We reached out and it came together beautifully.

Q: How did the project come to you?

Stone: Halle Berry and Vincent Cirrincione, who I produced it with, had the foresight to bring Santiago to Los Angeles to showcase his work to producers there, and that's when I saw it and got involved.

Q: It's unfair to pick someone out for their part since everyone was on point, but Jeffery Wright who you worked with in (He portrayed Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.) "Boycott" shot here, slams

dunks another performance.

Stone: If Jeffery called me tomorrow and said that he wanted to read the phone book on film, I would find a way to raise the money for it. He is his generation's best actor.

Q: You mentioned raising money. You've been producing projects now for ten years, has it gotten any easier to raise the money for a project?

Stone: I think with every project you start over. Every project is unique. I've been lucky in that I think HBO is one of the best places to make challenging, entertaining Black movies. Their support for these kinds of projects has been unparalleled.

Stan Washington writes for the Atlanta Voice.



Edward Patten is far right

Patten, a member of Gladys Knight & The Pips, dies

ATLANTA (AP) — Edward Patten, a member of the Grammy-winning Gladys Knight & The Pips, died early Friday at a suburban Detroit hospital, said his cousin, another member of the group. He was 65.

Patten, an Atlanta native who lived in Detroit, died at a hospital in Michigan from a stroke he suffered a few days before, said William Guest.

Gladys Knight & the Pips — comprised of Knight; her brother, Merald "Bubba" Knight; and their cousins Guest and Patten — recorded for Motown from 1966-1973 and for Buddah Records from 1973-77. They later recorded for CBS until breaking up in 1989.

The group, whose hits included "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" and "Midnight Train to Georgia," won four Grammys and was inducted to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1996.

Patten, known for his high tenor voice, joined the group in 1959, Guest said. Patten's father was a bandleader and he, along with the rest of the family, grew up around music.

Patten was one of the founders of Crew Records, based in Detroit and Atlanta, and sang backup for the label's recording artists, Crew spokeswoman Denise Fussell said.