

Emmy-winning miniseries 'Roots' arrives on DVD

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

Originally airing on television in 1977, the miniseries "Roots" was based on Alex Haley's Pulitzer Prize-winning best seller of the same name. The groundbreaking, autobiographical adventure introduced Levar Burton in the lead role as Kunta Kinte, and featured far too many co-stars to list them all. Among the stars are: Lou Gossett Jr., John Amos, Ed Asner, Ben Vereen, Maya Angelou,

Roxie Roker, O.J. Simpson, Scatman Crothers, Lloyd Bridges, George Hamilton, Todd Bridges, Burl Ives, Chuck Connors, Yvonne De Carlo, Lorne Greene, Yaphet Kotto, Cicely Tyson and Haley himself, to name a few.

The sweeping, genealogical saga sought to encapsulate the Black experience by telescoping in on the author's own family tree, starting in Africa in 1750 and ending in Arkansas a couple of centuries later. The show served as



an eye-opening exposé on the evils of slavery, as it forced the U.S. for the first time to

face that long-suppressed aspect of its legacy.

Among the critically-acclaimed program's accolades were nine Emmys, a Golden Globe, a Peabody, and over 100 other awards. Unfortunately, the production later lost a bit of its luster when Haley was sued successfully for plagiarizing parts of what was supposed to be his own very personal journey of self-discovery.

Though appearing a bit melodramatic in spots by

today's standards, this adaptation holds up enough to remain heartily recommended as a valuable history lesson and as a juxtaposition to demeaning satires of the series over the intervening years by shock comics such as Dave Chappelle.

DVD extras: Audi commentary by Levar Burton, Cicely Tyson and Ed Asner, Roots Family Tree CD Rom, cast members reminiscences, and "Behind the Scenes" plus another featurette.

Excellent (4 stars). Unrated.

Oprah 'stunned' by dad's plan for book

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Oprah Winfrey said she was "stunned" to learn her father plans to write a book about her.

"I was upset. I won't say devastated, but I was stunned," Winfrey told *New York's Daily News* in a story published Tuesday.

Winfrey said she laughed when one of her assistants told her the newspaper was calling to ask about a book her father, Vernon Winfrey, was writing.

"I said, 'That's impossible. I can assure them it's not true,'" she said. "...I called him and it turned out he is writing a book. The worst part of it was him saying, 'I meant to tell you I've been working on it.'"

Winfrey was living with her mother in Milwaukee when she was sent as a young teen to live with her father in Nashville. She previously has credited him for imposing discipline on her and stressing the importance of an education.

The *Daily News* reported that the conversation with Winfrey took place Sunday, when she was in New York to receive the Elie Wiesel Foundation Humanitarian Award.

Reached Tuesday, Michelle McIntyre, a spokeswoman for Winfrey's Chicago-based Harpo Productions Inc., said: "We're not going to issue any further comment."

Vernon Winfrey, who owns Winfrey Barber & Beauty Shop in Nashville, had left work Tuesday evening and was not available for comment.

Winfrey told the newspaper she last saw her father when he accompanied her on a trip to Africa a few months ago, but that they often talk and she has a good relationship with him.

"I would have preferred to have known my father was working on this. It would have been a nice gesture, a courtesy," she said.

Vernon Winfrey plans to call his book "Things Unspoken," according to the newspaper.



UNITY IN THE COMMUNITY

Hundreds of children and parents turned out for activities at the 15th Annual Unity Fest inside the Doolittle Community Center on Saturday. DJ Ronnie O provided the music for event which kept the gym floor rockin'.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy

Bo Diddley's condition improves after stroke

OMAHA, Nebraska (AP) - Four days after suffering a stroke, Bo Diddley walked around the intensive-care unit at a Nebraska hospital, and doctors were encouraged that the singer-songwriter-guitarist would be able to perform again, his manager said.

The 78-year-old Rock and Roll Hall of Famer told his audience he was not feeling well during a weekend show in Iowa earlier this month. Diddley's manager, Margo Lewis, said she had Diddley taken to the hospital by ambulance when he appeared disoriented the day after the show. Diddley's speech is impaired, but he has made significant progress.

"We're going to get a guitar for him and put it in his lap and let him entertain people here," Lewis said. "People think that would be good therapy for him."

Diddley, with his black glasses and low-slung guitar, has been an icon in the music industry since he topped the R&B charts with "Bo Diddley" in 1955.

His other hits include "Who Do You Love," "Before You Accuse Me," "Mona" and "I'm a Man."

He was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987 and was given a lifetime achievement Grammy in 1998.

Lewis said it is uncertain how long Diddley, who has a history of hypertension and diabetes, will be hospitalized. Lewis said she believes Diddley will sing again, even though he will require speech therapy.

"Singing a song is different than speaking," she said. "Even when there is a problem with speaking, or hesitancy, we've seen where people can sing perfectly."

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