DAWN Spotlight: New Face Behind Camera

Jessie Maple, 23, is the first black woman to become a full-fledged member of IA Local No. 644, the cameramen's union in the film industry.

Ambitious Jessie has had a checkered career to date even though she is only 23. Initially she was a reporter for the N.Y. Courier/Amsterdam News at the same time she was going to school at Third World Cinema, the film production unit that produced "Claudine" and also waged an aggressive campaign promoting minorities in the apprentice positions with the motion picture trade unions.

She handles big camera and pulls her weight

Through Third World Cinema, she became a member of Local No. 771, the editing division. Editing is a job performed in isolation without the stimulation of companionship which was not to Jessie's liking.

So, she continued her studies until she was eligible for the more gregarious and more challenging responsibilities of Local No. 644, where she handles the big cameras and pulls her weight as a full-fledged assistant cameraperson.

Her ears still ring with the surprised evidenced by fellow workers who tease her and shout their disbelief when she arrives on a set: "Hey fellows, look at that. That's our new camerman's assistant." The surprise and pleasure is because Jessie is not only accomplished at her job, but an exceptionally pretty young woman, fully aware of the stir she causes.

After the acknowledged blessing of attractiveness, Jessie goes to work. As assistant to the director-photographer, she is responsible for setting up the equipment, checking to be sure it is in perfect operating order, pulling "focus," changing the magazine when needed, threading the camera and keeping film inventory.

In other words, responsible for everything but the click. It is easy to see that an alert assistant is extremely valuable to a company — anticipating diminishing supplies, seeing the day's shooting is in focus, that the grey, hazy day is producing a desired eerie effect, rather than a blur of nothingness.

At 23, she has production company with her husband

Any one of the details Jessie is responsible for could result in a considerable loss of money to a motion picture company.

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JESSIE MAPLE AT WORK

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