Showtime

Short take from Hollywood:

By Bill Lane

Bill Cosby

A FEW YEARS AGO two bright-eyed young soul sisters arrived in Hollywood from Detroit with a batch of TV scripts and synopses to sell. They had to return to the Motor City and report a failed mission. The same kind of failure they had to report earlier after a trek to New York. Network TV was not ready for a black soap opera, as such.

But that was before the age of the Bill Cosby television starrer, which although a once-a-week prime-time show, could very well sail in the class of top soaps. And it's already known all over that the Cosby show is such a big hit because Cosby himself does nearly all of the show's formatting, the writers having only to type out what he wants the story to be, plot, dialogue, etc.

Now comes news that Columbia Pictures TV is trying to sell to TV its first black soap opera, "Heart and Soul," whose main boosters are Ralph Andrews and O.J. Simpson.

But here again is where Hollywood always tears its britches: the show is plotted and written by non-blacks. Despite all the black-show-white-writer tombstones now dotting the landscape (with still another one soon to be added). The reason always given is that whites have been writing these shows (about whites and for whites) longer "and know what sells." If that's so, why so many historic failures? And why does the Cosby show sell so greatly to whites and blacks alike?

Looks like we may be back on the "Onwards & Upwards" gambit again.

Damita Jo

MIDWEST comic Cha Cha Hogan has been doing a lot of driving between his Las Vegas home and Los Angeles recently, helping his pal Redd Foxx put together his new television laugher, "Drugstore." The show's musical theme features singer Damita Jo. And here's another show that has its star's personal formatting input. Could be and should be a winner when it airs on the tube.

MAD AS CAN BE could be Billy Eckstine, since the studio put on hold the Richard Pryor pic, "Jo Jo Dancer," which also featured Mister B. ... Eddie Murphy is calling all shots here at Paramount for his next film "Golden Child," which could well be re-titled before the deal goes down ... Cathy Lee Crosby doing great with her Jesse Jackson-like new self-esteem program, "Get High On Yourself," which programs widely in various alternative and high schools. It extolls the good life without drugs and crime. Meanwhile, Cathy Lee says her longtime romance with Richard Roundtree is now just a memory; she's busy with the quarterback of the Washington Redskins. Roundtree, by the way, getting new exposure since his pic "City Heat" is now showing on cable TV.

And speaking of cable, Bernard Shaw, Washington, D.C. anchorman for Ted Turner's CNN cable news service, is readying himself and his giant news gathering crew for the Geneva Summit meet coverage. Meanwhile, Ted Turner, owner of CNN (seen in 32 million homes night and day), has been dickering with NBC for investment money to support his recent purchase of MGM, with NBC reportedly saying it will invest for a 30 to 40 percent ownership of CNN, with sayso on what news is shown and who's hired. Turner says no on the latter. NBC says if he doesn't take the offer it will start its own cable news service—although it would take the network more than five years to get even a foothold like Turner has. Anyway, Turner has a lot of blacks working on his cable stations. Could NBC say the same?

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ANOTHER vintage singer, Al Hibbler, headed back to New York after a series of visits here with his dentist, for dental reconstruction. And deejay Magnificent Montague, who was a mighty popular record spinner back in the days of Cadet and VeeJay Records, is still riding the airwaves. He's now on the air five hours daily in Palm Springs, and at age 57 playing to a devoted "over-forty" wealthy audience—quite a contrast to the thousands of teenagers he once thrilled over the mikes in Chicago, NYC and L.A. He laughs: "I've mastered and tamed all the big cities."

Singer Michael Jackson says he's very happy to be all set to become the only movie star to have a feature film showing to millions—at only two movie houses in the U.S. Jackson's pic, "Captain Eo," a 3-dimension narrative musical, directed by Francis Coppola for Kodak, will debut next year at theaters in Disneyworld in Florida and Disneyland in California. It lasts 15 minutes, and's costing $15-million to produce.

A million a minute!

Michael Jackson

Around Town

By Vanessa Johnson

The "FANS" organization is extending an open invitation to all interested persons in joining them for a fun-filled, fantastic FAN-Fest on Sunday, Nov. 10, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at the Baltimore School for the Arts, 712 Cathedral St.

The event provides a wonderful opportunity to meet and chat with some of Baltimore's and Washington's best known celebrities in the arts, the media, and sports fields, as well as a chance to savor a delicious brunch prepared by seven of Baltimore's top caterers, and to enjoy excellent entertainment presented by the School of the Arts students. Call 396-1185 for more information.

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The Forest Park Branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library will be celebrating their 75th Anniversary Sunday, Nov. 10, 3 p.m., 3023 Garrison Blvd. with special guest Mrs. Freddie Durant author of "The Donaldson Mansion."

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Theatre Morgan will present "Medea" by Euripides. This production is special because of its unique setting. The play is adapted to the mythic black past, according to Harmon Watson, the director.

The production will run for only 10 performances, Nov. 8-10 and 15-17 at 8 p.m. in the Turpin-Lamb Little Theatre of the Murphy Fine Arts Center on campus. Call 444-3313 for additional information.

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Jazz Expressways, LTD is traveling to New York City (today) Nov. 8 for a soul food dinner, jazz concert outing.

The concert will feature the groups of Jimmy Smith, organ; Milt Jackson, vibes; and Gloria Lynn with the Earl May Quartet. The concert, co-sponsored by Jazz Mobile and the Philip Morris Co., will benefit the United Negro College Fund. Call 732-5786 for details.

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