SHOWTIME

Have you heard?

EDDIE MURPHY

JOYCE SIMS

By Penny S. Demps

THAT actor-comedian Eddie Murphy was slightly injured in a boating accident off the coast of Nassau in the Bahamas. While boating with his uncle, Ray Murphy, Sr., of Uniondale, N.J., and two friends, a boat piloted by overzealous fans collided with his vessel. All four men were treated for minor injuries. Murphy recently finished filming "Coming To America," with actors James Earl Jones and Arsenio Hall. In the movie, which premieres June 29, Murphy plays an African prince in search of a bride.

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THAT Joyce Sims has just triumphantly completed a whirlwind tour in the United Kingdom and Amsterdam, where she sold out every venue she played, including two nights at the world-famous Hammersmith Odeon in London. Strongly contributing to Ms. Sims' performances was the Joyce Sims Band, pumping out the sounds. Described as the "Voice of the 90's," classically post-modern with a skill and voice range that leaves others gasping." A native of Rochester, New York, Jovce wrote. arranged, performed and produced her debut album, "Come Into My Lite," she has already earned a gold album in the UK.

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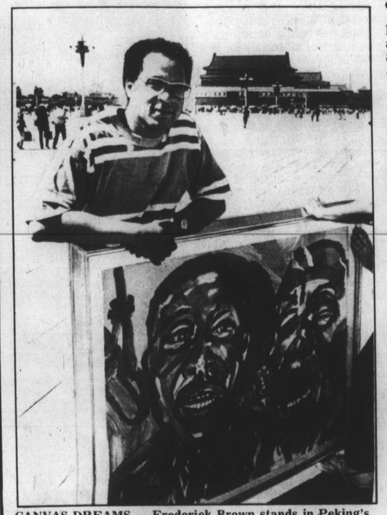
THAT jazz pianist Billy Taylor and his trio performed at the Third International Music Festival in Leningrad in May. Taylor was invited to the festival by the Union of Composers of the Soviet Union.

U.S. painter's exhibit China-bound

Expressionist painter Frederick Brown made art history June 1 when a retrospective of his works went on display at the National Museum of the Chinese Revolution in Beijing.

The New York resident's three-week display of 100 paintings marks the first time the works of a Western artist have been exhibited in a national museum in the People's Republic of China. Museum officials predict up to 30,000 people will attend the exhibit each day.



CANVAS DREAMS — Frederick Brown stands in Peking's Tiananmen Square with his 1988 painting of American musician Muddy Waters. First to hold a one-man art show in China, his exhibit will run to June 21.

The exhibition evolved from Brown's visits to China in 1985 and 1987, when he taught art at the Central College of Fine Arts and Crafts in Beijing.

"To share one's art with so many viewers is an artist's dream," said Brown, 43. "To do it in China is something else. China evokes mystery, cultural legacy and tradition, all issues that I deal with in my paintings."

Brown's paintings are characterized by vibrant colors and varied brushwork. He has been inspired by Max Beckmann, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollock and Franz Kline.

His themes are New Testament subjects, urban scenes, African and American Indian folk art and portraits of other painters and jazz and blues musicians.

Brown says most of his ideas for paintings come from his dreams.

"I think it is probably true for most creative people. The dream aspect makes it unnecessary to manufacture instances," he says. "You can live things through a dream state. I used to sleep a lot, and I would dream all the time. I've been able to retain about 90 percent of my dreams. I used to work on it as a kid, to remember what I dreamed.

"The dream state is absolutely necessary. You can't live without it. It is a conscious plane, not all fantasy. I had a dream once that I had 'x' number of paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And that dream came true."

In his studio, a loft in New York's Soho neighborhood, the music, jazz, blues, pop and soul — is always on.

"Music controls the rhythm of my work," Brown said. "Sound has lots of colors in it. There must be some kind of internal harmony that's going on.

His biggest musical influence is jazz and the blues, and his paintings have included portraits of Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, and former high school classmate Anthony Braxton.

Brown grew up near the steel mills in South Chicago, home to laborers who came up the Mississippi River, and of blues singers like Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and Lightnin' Hopkins.

He said his next project may be a series of 25 portraits of blues singers. "These people are dying off and nobody is replacing them," Brown said. "I feel it is my duty to preserve, in my own way, the emperors of the blues.

The works being exhibited in Beijing range from "Fish," a 1961 collage he did for a high school commercial art class, to a 1988 double portrait of blues singer Muddy Waters. The focal point is his huge (9 feet by 21 feet)versi on of "The Last Supper."

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BUSINESS PULSE

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Wrecks? for Rent in Randallstown

By Charles H. Brown
AFRO Staff Writer

When you think of the name Hertz and Avis you probably see images of O.J. Simpson running through airport corridors or the one where the car is driving down the highway unpiloted and a man comes drifting down into the driver's seat. Well, what do think of when you hear the name Rent-A-Wreck? Clifton Twiggy Blake is the owner of the new Rent-A-Wreck in Randallstown and the name to him means his own personal piece of prosperity pie.

Rent-A-Wreck is another California success story. After all who else but the people who brought us a computer called Apple and a rock for a pet would conceive of anyone wanting to rent a car that turns out to be a wreck. Most people return rentals when they find something wrong.

As to it's success there is a long explanation and a short one. First the long one. In 1976 David Schwartz, owner of Bundy's Very Used Cars, got an idea. Bundy's was located in West Los Angles, not far from the sprawling complexes of Hollywood and often movie stars will drop in and rent cars so that they could drive through town unnoticed. The cars were also popular with producers who would buy the cars for use in crash scenes, struggling actor types who, in the absence of an L.A. transit system and a steady paying job, could only afford to rent or buy from Bundy's

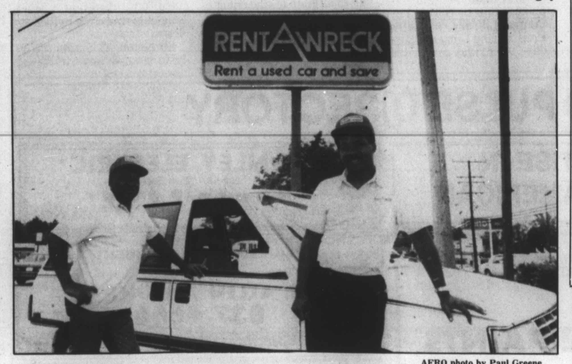
"The company became so popular people began to say, "Hey, let's go rent a wreck from Bundy's," said Cliff Blake, who prefers this explanation. Others however, preter the short version: There's no MTA in West L.A.

"He just accommodated the public and it spread throughout the country," said "Twiggy" Blake. "And now we're here in Baltimore."

Blake opened his Rent-A-Wreck in Randallstown this past April and received a warm welcome from his neighbors. "Are you actually going to have wrecks here," Blake was asked upon arrival.

But things have turned out well, "explained to everyone what I was planning to do and they were very happy to see me come into the area," said Blake.

But things have turned out well. "I expained to everyone what I was doing and they were very happy to have me in the area," and Blake. "I have cars that are basically three to four years old and I keep them maybe a year to a year and a half and then sell them off to buy new cars into the fleet.



AFRO photo by Paul Greene

RENT-A-WRECK — (From left) Dad, Tony Blake and son, Clifton "Twiggy" Blake show an example of their Rent-A-Wreck vehicles. The one-time California success story is doing equally well in Baltimore.

In fact, Twiggy sees selling used cars as a very big part of his business. "I have people driving around in my cars with insurance checks in their hands," said "Twiggy" Blake. Their car is in the shop totaled. They rent my car to get around in and the insurance company says "okay, go find yourself another car." I get first crack at them."

Rent-A-Wreck is not the city's only car rental agency and it's certainly not the largest. But it has accomplished what most successful entrepreneurs strive to do — it has found it's niche and exploited it.

"We are not in competition with Avis or Hertz," Twiggy said. "They go to airports and and so on. Rent-A-Wrecks are located in neighborhoods because our basic clientele is people who put their cars in the shop and need something to get around in for a couple of days."

The strategy has met with enviable success. The company attracts people out-to-it's location four miles west of the beltway with a combination of its's cash and credit card policy and it's low prices.

"I don't have enough cars to go around, said Twiggy Blake." "I have 17 cars and they go fast. People will wait if I don't have cars because they know I'm the cheapest. That's a problem for me. Being the cheapest you get all kinds of people, said Twiggy.

"I had this one brother in here who kept bringing cars back saying, 'something was wrong with them' " said Twiggy Blake. "He took out one car I had just put $900 in, drove it a few days, then said something was wrong with the transmission. Something wasn't right. In our manual it says watch out for delivery men and salespeople so I checked this guy's form. You know what he did for a living," asked Blake? "He delivered For Domino's Pizza. Full time, He was a nice brother but he was dogging my cars."

Also, said Blake, when you are known as the cheapest you need to watch your backside from professional snipers.

"Ray Bennett, of Channel 11, was down here and he told me another guy told him he was Rent-A-Wreck," said Blake. "So I called the guy and asked him 'are you Rent-A-Wreck?' He said, 'Who are you.' I said 'I'm Rent-A-Wreck.' So he said 'No I'm not Rent-A-Wreck. People just think I'm Rent-A-Wreck.' I paid a lot of money for that name" said Blake who doesn't want any other Wreck in his turf but his.

So Clifton Twiggy Blake sits in his Randallstown Rent-A-Wreck office where from the windows he can watch his wrecks roll in and roll out. From where he sits the view is good. Mighty good. And the future looks better. "I see around 75 cars, three to four locations, say Hunt-Valley-Towson, Owings Mills, Catonsville-Security, hotel outlets like the Hyatt or the Omni, 15 to 20 employees and $800,000 to $1 million in net worth. Plus I can sell good used cars to my customers," said Blake.

"I see great things."

Business Briefs

The Maryland Alliance for Responsible Investment, (M.A.R.I.) a coalition of twenty community groups, joined public officials to hail the signing of the Community Reinvestment Act, H.B. 588, for the State of Maryland. The bill which has been in the making for almost two years, requires banks to report the steps they have taken to meet the credit needs of small businesses and low and moderate income communities.

"This is a great first step on behalf of the State of Maryland. It comes after a long struggle, but struggle must continue until we are sure the investment needs of low-income people, farmers, and small businesses are met" said George Buntin, Executive Director of the Baltimore Branch of the NAACP.

The bill will be signed at a ceremony beginning at 9:30 a.m. in Annapolis, Md. at the State House, on May 27, 1988.

MCEA to hold 7th annual women's conference

In a continuing effort to address issues affecting women in the public workforce, the Maryland Classified Employees Association, Inc. will hold its seventh annual Women's Conference on Friday, June 10 at the Holiday Inn-Belmont from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The theme this year is "Marketing Yourself for the Next Move." Dr. Lucia Hawthorne, a long-time state employee who worked her way from a clerical worker to a Morgan State University professor in speech communication, will deliver the keynote address.

The one-day program will focus on creative and practical techniques for career growth. The agenda features Dr. Aris T. Allen, a private physician who will discuss health issues and Rep. Kweisi Mfume, who will share tips on how to market oneself in the political arena. Other topics include leadership skills, effective resume writing and interviewing techniques, and family oriented legislation.

Agents facing insurance class

By Charles H. Brown
AFRO STaff Writer

The Maryland Life Underwriters Association has successfully lobbied the Maryland State legislature to require all insurance agents doing business in the state to attend 16 hours of classroom instruction annually.

"Our offices continue to receive calls from agents who are unclear of what they need to do," said John Styer, a Harford County agent for New York Life and President of the MSALU in an association press release.

"It's really quite simple," said Styer. "They (agents) need to attend and participate in 16 hours of Maryland State Insurance Commission approved continuing education classes every two years. If they fail to do so, they will lose their right to sell insurance in Maryland."

"That makes it a better profession," said Vanessa Young, an Allstate agent who has been licensed for the past 12 years. "It helps to provide better customer service.

"I'm retiring so it doesn't worry me," said Malcolm E. Burman, a Randallstown agent for Nationwide Insurance. "I don't know what the full purpose is behind it but I believe it's justified.

But other insurance agents disagree.

"It's a total waste of time," said Carl Turner, from the Allstate Insurance offices on the second floor of the Rotunda Building. "There is a lot of theory and law and it doesn't help within the day to-day dealings with my everyday customers.

"The insurance industry and its products are changing rapidly," wrote Styer in the release. "Insurance agents have to keep up-to-date with what's available for their clients if they are going to provide professional service to consumers."

The first deadline under the new law is June 30, 1989 and some classes have already been offered with additional classes being prepared for the coming year.

"I've seen the list of programs and it's primarily theory and law," said Turner of Allstate, who feels that the program will place an unnecessary additional burden on the already overburdened agent.

Bits of Business

Bankers optimistic despite loss of ground

In 1987, for the fourth year in a row, no new black-controlled banks opened and, according to a special report on banking issues by Black Enterprise, there was a decrease in the number of banks — from 39 to 36.

Nevertheless, a new crop of black bankers hope to make mismanagement and inexperienced boards of directors—the reasons for the majority of bank failures — a thing of the past.

Richard Shealey, president of Chicago's Independence said that "People with academic and professional training are joining with local entrepreneurs . . . who learned the hard way. Now there is a different (level of) expertise that creates greater stability and discipline."

According to Ronald A. Homer, president of Boston Bank of Commerce, "We (bankers) need to get to the point where we can make loans to the BE 100 as a consortium or finance a leveraged buy out deal such as TLC Beatrice International Holdings, Inc."

The report noted that black banks are, however, faring better than their white counterparts. And the Federal Reserves 1987 report on selected assets and liabilities showed the top 10 black banks besting majority banks in the areas of both return on assets and equities.

Feds share of public school funding leveling

The proportion of federal aid to the nation's public schools stayed at just over six percent in 1986, according to the Commerce Department's Census Bureau reports.

The federal aid percentage reached a high of about nine percent in 1980 and dropped each year since.

Total federal aid to public schools rose to $9.7 billion, up from $8.9 billion the previous year.

Pack Your Bags

Conference Update

The Black Faculty and Staff Association of the University of Maryland College Park.

The conference will address such problems as the declining representation of Blacks among faculty and administrators, the increasingly hostile campus climates for black and other minority students and staff, and the need for better recruitment and retention programs for black students.

June 8-10
College Park, Maryland
For more information, call (301) 454-4954.

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Seminar: Investment Commercial Loans for Small Business Owners

The seminar will discuss different types of bank investments on how they can be used to improve cash flow. Picking the right loans for the right needs (Seasonal, Intermediate, Capital Expenditures). Free, reservations are necessary.

June 11
Sovran D.C. National Bank
1801 K Street
For more information, call (202) 955-8188

Journalists to examine Kerner report and '68 riots

WASHINGTON AFRO-AMERICAN publisher Frances Murphy II will be among the stellar panel of veteran black journalists examining the coverage of the 1968 riots by both the black and white press during the annual conference sponsored by Region IV members of the National Association of Black Journalists.

Working journalists from four eastern states are expected to attend the June 11 conference at Howard University to examine the Kerner Commission Report on American racial attitudes nearly 20 years after the findings.

Assistant U.S. Attorney General William Bradford Reynolds, former EEOC chair Eleanor Holmes Norton and author Roger Wilkins will address the gathering at the opening session.

FRANCES L. MURPHY, II
Publisher, Washington AFRO-AMERICAN

"This is the right time for us to be taking a look at what we have achieved or lost over the last 20 years" said Murphy, "and with this, we have the opportunity to assess what we can expect and hope for in the next 20 years".

Murphy - who is also an associate professor in the Department of Journalism at Howard University - will be joined by internationally syndicated columnist Ethel Payne, noted broadcaster Mal Goode , and Washington Post columnist William Raspberry.

In addition to the panel presentations, conference attendees will explore alternative career options beyond the newsroom in the fields of filmmaking, public relations, publishing, and free-lance writing.

By Robyn-Denise Yourse
AFRO Staff Writer