ABOUT TV

By Deborah Quinerly

"Man's got to have a reason to live." These words, referring to freedom and spoken by LeVar Burton as Kunta Kinte, are the recurring theme in the two-hour television movie, "AT&T PRESENTS: Roots: The Gift," airing Sunday (11th) at 9:00 p.m. on Channels 13 and 7.

Directed by Kevin Hooks ("White Shadow," "Sounder"), set in 1770, and based on author Alex Haley's "Roots" characters, the seasoned slave Fiddler (Louis Gossett, Jr.) and the young rebellious African, Kunta Kinte (Burton), accompany their owner on a visit to a neighboring plantation and become involved in a secret mission to lead a group of slaves to freedom on Christmas Eve.

Although Kunta Kinte and Fiddler are real persons in Alex Haley's heritage, the story is fictional but based upon repetitive actual occurrences within the Underground Railroad's early history.

Avery Brooks ("Spencer: For Hire"), Gossett, and Burton offer strong and believable performances, and the viewer feels the anguish of their slavery and gain empathy with each character's personal predicament—Brooks, as Cletus Moyer, "a free man of color," risks his life by returning to the South from the North to help slaves escape to freedom; Fiddler, an old slave who wants to be free but is uncertain of freedom's consequences; and Kunta Kinte who remembers his Mandingo Warrior heritage and sees himself as a "dead" man, as long as he is a slave.

To assist them with their search for freedom is Shaun Cassidy, as Edmund Parker, Jr., a covert abolishionist and son of a slave owner.

Though this is a Christmas special, do not expect a "Peace on Earth, Goodwill to men" or "happily ever after" fairy tale. No bars are held on the slavery issue. Threaded throughout this joyous holiday season are the harsh realizations of slavery. Such as humiliation, when Kunta is made to pretend he is a camel with a bit placed in his mouth, a white child on his back, and a whip to control this "animal." And, death, when three slaves are hung, as examples and a reminder that blacks have their place—and being a free people is not one of them.

LOUIS GOSSETT, JR. (L) and LeVar Burton return as Fiddler and Kunta Kinte, when AT&T PRESENTS "ROOTS: THE GIFT," which airs Sunday at 9:00 p.m. on Channels 13 and 7.

One particular ironical situation involves a character named Marcellus, played by Tim Russ. Upon meeting him, Fiddler remarks, from Marcellus' authoritative and arrogant demeanor, Marcellus must be the "head n . . . .r." His very convincing and commendable role as the head house slave is shown the "light" when a few slaves attempt an escape, and he is rounded up, just like the "lower-class slaves" to be taught a very visual lesson for disobeying the "Massah."

No, this eequel to the award-winning miniseries "Roots" is not as absorbing or gripping. But it is worth watching. Because whether it is 1770, 1790, or 1988, this movie is a reminder that we will have a long way to go.

TV CAPSULES

Saturday, December 10

"STARLITE THEATRE: The Long Ships" (1-3:30 a.m.) **Sidney Poitier** and Richard Widmark star in this film classic. Channel 45.

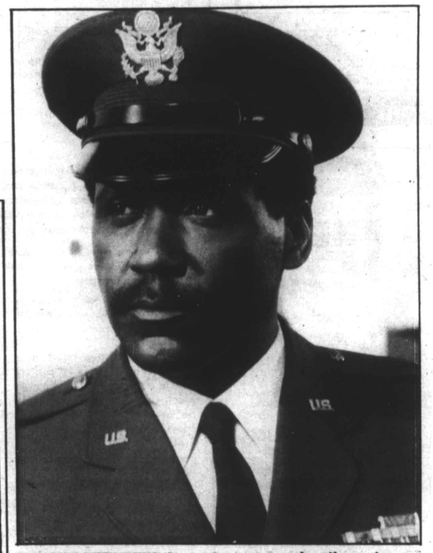
"BATTLE OF THE NETWORK STARS" (9-11:00 p.m.) **Malcolm-Jamal Warner** ("The Cosby Show"), **Daphne Maxwell Reid** ("Frank's Place"), and **Sheri Belafonte** compete with other celebrities in athletic events. Channels 7 and 13.

Tuesday, December 13

"CBS LATE NIGHT MOVIE: "The Hitter" (1:10-2:30 a.m.) **Ron O'Neal** and **Sheila Frazier** star in this drama about a professional boxer who accidentally kills an opponent during a match. Channel 9.

Wednesday, December 14

"FREE TO BE . . . A FAMILY" (8-9:00 p.m.) **Whoopi Goldberg** costars in this unique comedy/variety special celebrating international friendship between Russian and American children. Channels 7 and 13.



RICHARD ROUNDTREE guest stars as a hostile major on "MURDER, SHE WROTE" Sunday at 8:00 p.m. on Channels 9 and 11.

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ALL THAT JAZZ

By Bob Matthews

Major jazz events this weekend include Sunday, Dec. 11 concerts by **Jack McDuff** and his 7-piece band at the Tawes Auditorium of Coppin State College, 2500 W. North Ave.

Tis the final concert of the season by the Left Bank Jazz Society, and the usual amenities are in effect, BYOP and picnic baskets welcomed. Concert goes from 5 - 9 p.m. Further information, (301)945-2266.

* * *

At the Sheraton Harrisburg East, the Central Pennsylvania Friends of Jazz host a benefit holiday party for retarded citizens, featuring **Houston Person and Etta Jones.**

Session goes on from 7 - 11 p.m. To get there, it is right off Exit 29 of I-83, just outside Harrisburg, PA. Further information, (717)257-5441.

* * *

Always like to call attention to some little-known events in jazz that are extremely worthy, and the Smithsonian National Associates is putting on jazz seminar January 11-14.

It will be led by **Martin Williams** the creator of the Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz, and the program is geared for the jazz buffs as well as for new listeners.

Included in the lectures and other sessions are emphases on: **Jelly Roll Morton**, leading exponent of New Orleans jazz, and one of the early forerunners of the jazz idiom.

Louis Armstrong, tracing the life and works of the first truly innovative trumpeter, who set the pace for a style which developed into swing.

Duke Ellington, and examination of the big band style and how a leader and an orchestra together created a musical aura which exists to this day.

Charlie Parker, the man who changed the face of jazz, introducing bebop, a style which became the *ne plus ultra* of modern jazz.

Thelonious Monk, one of the greatest composers, and improvisational artist.

Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane, tracing the evolution of the chordless free form jazz pioneered by these two reed men.

World Saxophone Quartet, one of the most inventive groups still around today. Also, the works of some of the legends of jazz will be heard and discussed, including **Bix Beiderbecke, Teddy Wilson, Count Basie, Billie Holliday, Benny Goodman** and others.

Checked with the Institution, and was told that you don't have to be a member in order to participate in the seminar. Naturally, it's not free, and you can get all the details at (202)357-1350.

* * *

It's about that time that the struggle over what to get someone special for Christmas becomes paramount. So, to help a bit, next week, we'll suggest some things for the jazz buffs.

MICKEY FIELDS

You would probably be amazed at the "product" available these days, including CDs, LPs, and videos. So, we'll list a few we have investigated.

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Must note in passing that **Gail Martin and Karen G.** are at the Eubie Blake Room of the Fishmarket through Sunday night. Was chatting with **Mickey Fields** last Monday night, who said he may be joining the ladies for this gig.

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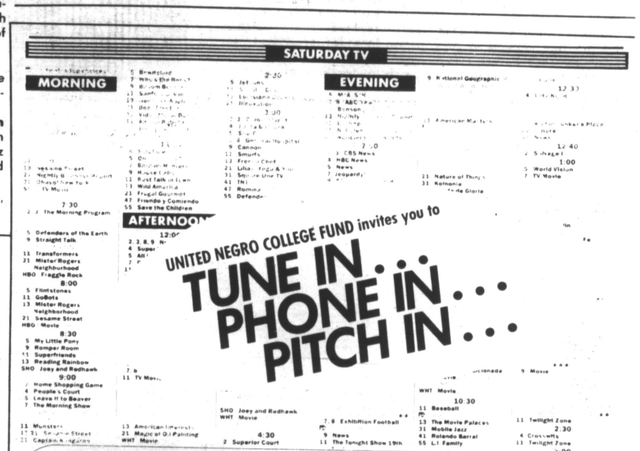
Must sadly note the death of two DC musicians this past week. Tenor saxophonist **Charlie Rouse** last week, and guitarist **Bill Harris**, this week. Both will be missed.



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close up

Saturday, December 17, 1988

Stars turn out in full force for the biggest tele-event of the holiday season.

It's the eighth annual gala benefitting the United Negro College Fund—the **Lou Rawls Parade of Stars** telethon.

More than fifty of the biggest entertainers will be there, all pitching in to give higher education a boost. The seven hour extravaganza features performances by stars like Sammy Davis, Jr., Al Jarreau, Pia Zadora, Bill Cosby, Kenny Rogers, Anita Baker, Al Green, Wil Shriner and dozens more.

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