



1884 - 1951

Volume 1

February, 1993

## Clips...Clips...Clips...Clips...Clips...Clips...Clips...Clips...Clips...

Oscar Micheaux, along with eleven other independent African American filmmakers, was inducted into the Miller Brewing Gallery of Greats in Los Angeles in January, 1992. Micheaux was honored for his role in creating a distinct African American independent cinema from 1918-1948. This year marked the first time that filmmakers have been included in the Gallery of Greats program which has recognized the achievements of blacks in different areas for almost 20 years. Other honorees included Madeline Anderson, St. Clair Bourne, Charles Burnett, Ossie Davis, William Greaves, Charles Lane, Spike Lee, Michelle Parkerson, and Melvin Van Peebles.

Print Source: *The Independent* 6/91

**Archive Info . . .** For information about programming and upcoming events contact:

**UCLA Film and Television Archive**  
University of California - Los Angeles  
1438 Melnitz Hall  
405 Hilgard Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90024  
(213) 825-8263

**The Tyler, Texas Black Film Archive**  
Southwest Film & Video Collection  
SMU  
P. O. Box 194  
Dallas, TX 75275  
(214) 768 - 1682/768 - 1684

**The Brooklyn Museum**  
200 Eastern Parkway  
Brooklyn, NY 11238  
(718) 638 - 5000, ext. 232

**African Diaspora Images**  
71 Joralemon Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
(718) 852 - 8353

### **1993 Conferences.....**

#### **January 28 - 30**

The Eighteenth Annual Conference on Literature and Film: "Authority and Transgression in Literature and Film" in Tallahassee Florida.

#### **February 11 - 14**

Society for Cinema Studies Conference in New Orleans. Three panels focused on black themes: Frank Updike on African Women Filmmakers; Todd Boyd on Black Action Films; and Mark Reid on "The Construction of Malcolm X in Film, Video, and Television."

**William T. Alexander's Black Newsreels** were shown at the American Museum of the Moving Image October 17 - 18, 1992. Entitled "Rediscovered Black Newsreels," the screening featured the productions of Alexander's American Newsreel Company which he established (at the urging of Eleanor T. Roosevelt) so that African Americans could know what was happening to their family members involved in World War II. The collection (3/4" copy) will be housed at the Schomburg for research. CBS now owns the originals and the rights. For more information about the newsreels, contact Doug McKinney at (212) 975 - 5387.

**From Harlem to Hollywood: American Race Movies 1912-1948** an exhibition and screening of films produced for black audiences opened at the American Museum of the Moving Image on October 1, 1990. The exhibit, only, was opened through February 28, 1993. For additional information, contact the: American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Avenue and 36th Street, Astoria, NY 11106, (718) 784-4520.

**Addendum:** *Within Our Gates* has been added to the Library of Congress list of protected films.

*Veiled Aristocrats* Uncovered in Tennessee  
By Richard Grupenhoff

Oscar Micheaux's long-lost feature film, *Veiled Aristocrats*, was rediscovered by a film collector in the summer of 1991, amid a cache of about fifty films stored in a garage in Tennessee. Soon after that, I received a call from Jack Hardy, a film collector of Grapevine Video in Phoenix, who had uncovered *Veiled Aristocrats*, and who wanted to know if the find was of any value. I replied that if he had what he said he had, then it was indeed valuable, perhaps not from a monetary point of view, but certainly from an historic point of view. Hardy transferred the delicate nitrate print to a one-inch video master, and he sent me the first half-inch VHS dub for examination and viewing. He donated the original prints to the Eastman House so a preservation print could be made.

This version of *Veiled Aristocrats* is about forty-five minutes in length, out of what was originally a feature film of approximately sixty-five minutes. Apparently, two reels of film have been lost or deleted. There are also a few problems with the sound track and there are jump cuts and deletions caused by the deterioration of some of the frames that were beyond saving.

Produced in 1932, *Veiled Aristocrats* was one of Micheaux's first sound films, an adaptation of Charles W. Chesnutt's turn-of-the-century novel, *The House Behind the Cedars*. Briefly, *Veiled Aristocrats* is a story of "passing through the veil," to paraphrase DuBois, and create new lives and new identities in white society. John Waldron, played by Race Movie idol, Lorenzo Tucker, had passed undetected into the white world as a boy. Twenty years later, as a successful white lawyer, he returns home to his roots in order to take his light-skinned sister, Rena, back with him where he hopes to arrange a marriage between her and his white lawyer friend.

In the novel, Chesnutt had Rena die in the end--a tragic mulatto figure who could not find happiness in either world of white or black. But Micheaux, in an intriguing departure from the text, has Rena rebel against the idea of passing and return home

to her mother and dark-skinned fiancé, thereby remaining true to her identity.

Despite the fact that the film contains examples of Micheaux's often clumsy *mise en scene* and editing techniques, and that the actors sometimes read their lines without nuance, the film remains a probing examination not only of the issue of race, but of issues of class and gender as well. Moreover, it is all the more interesting because the story is told from the marginalized black perspective of 1932. And Micheaux was doubly marginalized, since his often controversial business tactics and vernacular films made him *persona non grata* among the black intellectual elite of the Harlem Renaissance.

This discovery of *Veiled Aristocrats* provides film historians with another piece of evidence to add to the study of Oscar Micheaux, and suggests that it is time for film historians to begin a dialogue of cooperation with the large network of film collectors throughout the United States. If primary artifacts like *Veiled Aristocrats* are to be reclaimed, they will probably be found by film collectors working in the field, not by scholars in the library. It might be valuable, therefore, to convene a joint meeting of film historians and film collectors to identify avenues of discovery and retrieval and to seek methods of mutual assistance.

Richard Grupenhoff is an Associate Professor of Communications at Rowan College of New Jersey. He is the author of *The Black Valentino: The Stage and Screen Career of Lorenzo Tucker*.

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**Editor's Note:**

**The restoration of *Veiled Aristocrats* is now complete. The film premiered at the Miami Film Festival on February 8, 1993.**

**See SCREENINGS for further details.**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY UPDATE

**Guy Hennebelle's** *CinemAction* (1980) on le cinema noir Americain includes articles, interviews, biographies, and filmographies. This work is one of the most complete resources on both classic and contemporary films. Not surprisingly, it has been published in French and no translation is currently available. The following titles are relevant to early black cinema studies: "The Building Blocks of Black Cinema" (Phyllis Klotman), "The First Black Independents" (Mark Reid), "Oscar Micheaux, the Pioneer" (Pearl Bowser), "Spencer Williams, the Douanier Rousseau of Black Film" (Thomas Cripps) and "Lorenzo Tucker, the 'Black Valentino'" (Roy Campanella, Jr.) To order, write to: Bulletin De Commande, 106, boulevard Saint-Denis, 92400 Courbevoie (100 francs). **Brian Taves** has written on black filmmaking in the 1930's for Tina Balio's volume on the decade in the History of the American Cinema Series (1993). Taves situates black films within their commercial context, emphasizing the increasingly commercial aspects that developed as black cinema adapted Hollywood genres. **Dan Streible's** review of G. William Jones' *Black Cinema Treasures: Lost and Found* (U of North Texas Press, 1991) will appear in *Velvet Light Trap* No. 31, Spring, 1993. Streible's review mentions the rediscovery of *Within Our Gates*, although it is not detailed in the book. **Douglas Gomery's** *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* includes a chapter entitled Movie Theatres for Black Americans which details, to a limited extent, the moviegoing habits of African Americans from the 1920's to the 1960's. **Colin MacCabe and Cornel West** have edited *White Screens/Black Images* (1993), a collection of essays by James Snead on classical Hollywood cinema and black independent film from 1915 to 1985. **Manthia Diawara's** *Black American Cinema* is a collection of essays on the contributions of African American filmmakers from the Micheaux era to the present. Contributors include Toni Cade Bambara, Jane Gaines, Ron Green, Phyllis Klotman, Clyde Taylor, and Michelle Wallace.

## A/V RESOURCES

**National Public Radio** aired a program about the William Alexander newsreels on October 15, 1992 on the *Morning Edition*. The producers also included information from Thomas Cripps about Oscar Micheaux. For written transcripts or audio cassettes of the program, contact: NPR Audience Services, 2025 M Street NW, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 822-2323. Transcripts are available at a cost of \$10.00.; audio cassettes are \$12.00. Allow 3 - 4 weeks for delivery.

**Veiled Aristocrats** (1932), produced by Oscar Micheaux, was transferred from the only known 35mm film earlier this year at Eastman House. It is now available on video from: Grapevine Video, P. O. Box 46161, Phoenix, Arizona 85063. The cost is \$12.95 for the 48 min. video and an additional \$3.00 for shipping.

**Proud To Be: A Black Video Collection** offers the following videos of Micheaux films: *God's Stepchildren* (#CD196 - \$34.95), *The Girl from Chicago* (#CD182 - \$29.95), *Ten Minutes to Live* (#CD117 - \$34.95), *Lying Lips* (#CD197 - \$29.95), and *Body and Soul* (#CD397 - \$34.95). To order, contact Barbara A. Holston at Proud To Be, 1235-E East Blvd. Suite 209, Charlotte, NC 28203, (704) 523-2227.

## SCREENINGS: 1992-93

**MAY 6, 1992** "Black Film Pioneers: Oscar Micheaux and the Lincoln Motion Picture Company," sponsored by The Black Film Institute of the District of Columbia. Panelists were Pearl Bowser, Jane Gaines, Clyde Taylor, and Jacquie Jones.

**November 8, 1992** at The Film Society of Lincoln Center, *Within Our Gates*. was shown. Donald Bogle discussed the film and the work of Oscar Micheaux following the screening.

**August 7, 1992** at the Blacklight Film Festival, Film Center of the Art Institute of Chicago, *Within Our Gates*. Musical accompaniment by 8 Bold Souls.

**February 6, 1993**, rescreening of *Within Our Gates* at the Art Institute of Chicago with music by Clovis Bordeaux.

**March 4th and 7th, 1993**, at the Film Center at the School of the Art Institute *Veiled Aristocrats*. Both screenings scheduled at 6: 00.

## ON THE AIR

**SPRING, 1993** WBGH-TV, Boston will air "Midnight Ramble: The Story of Race Movies" on the PBS "The American Experience" series.

## African American Newspaper Bibliography

An excellent source for information on early black cinema is the black press. The following listing **does not** include every African American newspaper. The sources listed are those that are not usually cited and should therefore lead to some interesting inquiry. For each title, the date started or the inclusive dates are listed when known.

Birmingham Reporter, 1902  
Birmingham Review, 1933  
Birmingham World, 1931  
California Voice, Oakland, CA, 1919  
Call-Missouri, Kansas City, KA, 1919  
Cape Fear Journal, Wilmington, NC,  
Carolina Times, Durham, NC  
Carolinian, Raleigh, NC  
Charlotte Post, Charlotte, NC  
Chicago Whip, 1919  
Chronicle, Boston, MA, 1916  
City Times, Galveston, TX, 1898-1930  
Cleveland Guide, 1931  
Cleveland Herald, 1938  
Colored American, Galveston, TX, 1920-1925  
Detroit Tribune, 1922  
Ehtiopian World, New York, NY, 1917-1933  
Gary American, 1925  
Herald, Austin, TX, 1890-1930  
Houston Sentinel, 1927-1931  
Houston Observer, 1916-1921  
Huntsville News, 1917-1923  
Independent, Atlanta, GA, 1903-1933  
Jounal and Guide, Norfolk, VA, 1901  
Kansas City Advocate, 1914-1926  
Kansas City Sun, 1908-1924  
Louisville Defender, 1933  
Miami Times, 1923  
Miami Whip, 1943  
Michigan Chronicle, 1936  
Mind, Fort Worth, TX, 1931

Muskogee Lantern  
Muskogee, OK, 1902-1226  
Negro World, NewYork, NY,  
1919- 1933  
New Jersey Herald News,  
Newark, NJ, 1927  
New Jersey Record, Newark, NJ, 1934  
Oakland Times, 1923  
Oklahoma Eagle, Tulsa, OK, 1922  
Omaha Guide, 1927  
Palmetto Leader, Columbus, SC, 1925  
People's Elevator, Independence, KA, 1924-1931  
People's Voice, New York, NY, 1942  
Philadelphia Independent, 1931  
Reporter, Natchex, MS, 1909  
Rochester Voice, 1933  
St. Louis American, 1928  
St. Louis Argus, 1912  
San Antonio Register, 1931  
Sepia Socialite , New Orleans, LA, 1936  
(Became Negro South magazine, 1946)  
Tampa Bulletin, 1915  
Union, Cincinnati, OPH, 1907  
Washington Tribune, DC, 1920  
Western Outlook, Oakland, CA, 1894-1928  
Wichita Protest, 1918-1930

Print Source: This list was  
compiled from Warren Brown's  
Check list of Negro Newspapers in  
the United States(1847-1946).  
Jefferson City, Missouri  
School of Journalism, Lincoln  
University, 1946.

READ

ALL

ABOUT

IT

**IN OUR NEXT ISSUE . . . MICHEAUX: MYTH & REALITY**

We will examine the myths and realities surrounding Oscar Micheaux because so much of what is published about Micheaux is contradictory, well, OK, wrong. If you would like to take part in deciphering the truth about Micheaux, send in your favorite myth or reality check to: The Oscar Micheaux Society Newsletter, Program in Film & Video, 107A Art Museum, Duke University, Durham, NC 27708.

**Micheaux: The Consummate Businessman**

Micheaux always manipulated his finances in order to produce his films independently. The following is a rendition of a stock certificate reprinted from the George P. Johnson Film Collection.

**MICHEAUX BOOK & FILM COMPANY  
OSCAR MICHEAUX, PRESIDENT**

**NEW YORK  
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**SPECIAL  
FEATURES  
ONLY**

**Subscription for Stock in the MICHEAUX BOOK & FILM COMPANY**  
*, the undersigned, do hereby subscribe for \_\_\_\_\_ shares of the Capital*

*Stock of the MICHEAUX BOOK & FILM COMPANY, to be incorporated under the laws of the State of Iowa with an authorized capital stock of twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000.00) divided into 200 shares of \$100.00 a share, fully paid and nonassessable, 5 per 100 common and 100 7% preferred and participating. agree to pay the said company for each of the said shares the sum of \$100.00 as soon as they are duly incorporated, of said shares to be issued and delivered to me on receipt thereof by said Company.*

WITNESS hand and seal at \_\_\_\_\_, State of \_\_\_\_\_  
this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 191

(Seal)



Clip and mail-----

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please complete the following form and mail it to the Oscar Micheaux Society Newsletter, Program in Film & Video, 107A Art Museum, Duke University, Durham, NC 27708.

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## Blacklight Screens Within Our Gates



By Sheila Smith McKoy

At a screening of Micheaux's *Within Our Gates* on August 7, 1992, Floyd Webb, founder of the Blacklight Festival of International Black Cinema, orchestrated a postmodernist equivalent to the silent film experience. With the assistance of jazz musicians, 8 Bold Souls, directed by composer and saxophonist, Ed Wilkerson, Webb offered something unusual: a screening complete with a live musical score and interpreter. The score composed for the film was improvised to heighten and to foreshadow events in the film. The music was used, as Wilkerson indicated, "to enhance an interpret Micheaux's controversial film . . . to move and parallel with the movie in a way that would be closer to the film than a background score could." The screening drew a capacity crowd of about 330 people.

Webb believes that the musicians involved in 8 Bold Souls and the organization which some of them founded, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), are the musical successors to the musicians who played at the original Chicago screening of the film at Hammond's Vendome in 1920. There is some evidence that "Capt." Walter Dyett, musical instructor at Phillips High School who taught Nat

King Cole, may have been in the band that played for the 1920 screening. His influence on musicians in the Chicago area can be seen in the work of the musicians of the AACM who are dedicated to variety of musical forms in the African American tradition.

Webb, who founded Blacklight twelve years ago, is dedicated to preserving early black cinema, but also to making *Within Our Gates* available to the public. As both Webb and Wilkerson point out, the film, although recovered almost two years ago, has not been made available and has not been subtitled in English. As Webb stated, "Micheaux made this film so that it could be seen by as many people for as long as possible. . . the 'ownership' of these artifacts by the academic community doesn't allow for this to happen."

Webb and Wilkerson are currently working on an English version with an original score, thereby hoping to make the film available to the public in the way Micheaux intended. In addition, Webb challenges scholars to restore the original ending of *Within Our Gates* which actress Evelyn Preer describes (in the Pittsburgh Courier in June, 1927) as one of the most exciting and realistic fight sequences in history in which her black lover attacks a would-be white rapist.

### THE BLACK FILM REVIEW

- \* Vaudeville \* Nickelodeon
- \* Style & Legacy of Oscar Micheaux \* The Black film Crisis of '37 - '39
- \* Rare Photos and MORE!
- February, 1993 issue

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**The Oscar Micheaux Society newsletter is dedicated to providing a medium through which we can promote discourse, debate, and discovery about filmmaker and novelist Oscar Micheaux and others who were active in early African American cinema. Unfortunately, much of their work remains inaccessible. It is through this medium that we hope to provide an avenue for rigorous inquiry into Micheaux and others who were active in early African American cinema. Information and articles for editorial review should be sent to:**

**The Oscar Micheaux Newsletter  
107 A Art Museum  
Duke University  
Durham, NC 27708  
Editors: Charlene Regeister & Jane Gaines  
Editorial Assistant: Sheila Smith - McKoy**