

The (W)rap SHEET

Black Film Center/Archive
Indiana University

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EDITOR: LESLIE HOUIN

Sam Greenlee Visits the BFC/A



"My maternal grandfather and my mother were light enough to pass. My grandfather was what was called at the time a 'race man' or someone who was for the [Black] race," reminisced Sam Greenlee, author and screenwriter of *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* during an interview with Michael Martin and David Wall at the BFC/A.

"Saint Luke's Hospital in Chicago didn't accept Blacks [in the 1930], so he was going to break down the color barrier. So, he and my mother went down and signed

up for my birth. And imagine the looks on the white folks' faces when I came out!"

And so Greenlee's life began with an act of controversy and rebellion, a common theme which punctuated important stages of his life and inspired his most creative works in literature and film. Greenlee came back to Indiana University this past March to attend a screening of *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* at IU Cinema. The film portrays the life of Dan Freeman, an ex-CIA agent who formulates an insurgency amongst the lumpen-proletariat Blacks in the

South Side of Chicago to upend the social status quo.

A former employee of the United States Information Agency, Greenlee's experience in Iraq, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Greece during the 1950s and 60s served as inspiration for his novel. However, he is quick to note that the ghetto of Chicago has much more in common with these nations than other areas of the United States and that his childhood experiences in the ghetto also served as the primary target audience of his novel and

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Q&A with L.H. Stallings

Nzingha Kendall interviews Dr. LaMonda Stallings, Guest Editor of the Spring Issue 2011 *Black Camera*

NK: You were the guest editor for the most recent edition of *Black Camera*. Can you tell us about the experience? What sparked the idea for this specially-themed issue on black sexuality onscreen?

LHS: It was a great experience. The essays selected out of those submitted seemed to have some commonalities that I wanted for the issue. Because there have only been brief examinations of black sexuality and eroticism on film, I wanted the issue to try to reflect a wide range of possibilities and depth. That's really what sparked the idea for the special theme, the need for an extended conversation on the subject.

NK: The scope of the films analyzed in this issue cross genres (experimental, musical, porn, documentary) and national boundaries. Nevertheless, none of the films discussed could be considered 'mainstream.' Was this intentional or do you think the wide range is indicative of a general move away from monolithic representations of blackness in black film?

LHS: It was and was not intentional. I thought that I would select some essays on mainstream films, but the essays submitted on mainstream films seemed to have very basic ideas about what eroticism is, as well as limited ways of thinking about how black sexuality should be

represented on film. I think when it comes to black eroticism and sexuality on screen in mainstream we still have to deal with basic cinematic representations of blackness.

NK: The cover of the issue features a reproduction of Aja Roache's painting, *Blue Lady*. Can you tell us why you chose this particular image to introduce this special issue of the journal?

LHS: Well, Aja Roache is a phenomenal artist from Tallahassee, Florida. She received her BFA from Florida A&M University and her MA from New York University in Interdisciplinary Studies, Humanities and Social Thought. When I told her I was looking for cover art and what the theme of the issue was, she sent me several images. All of them were great, but *Blue Lady* was the most striking piece and it aesthetically captured the way each individual writer seemed to articulate their own perspectives about sexuality, eroticism and black subjectivity. I think both Roache's coloring of the female subject in a blue background, as well as *Blue Lady*'s gaze out symbolizes the very reimagining of bodies and

gazes that the issue aspires to do in its dialogue about film, cinema and video.

NK: In addition to your work with *Black Camera*, you organized an evening with experimental filmmaker Cauleen Smith. Can you tell us about your engagement with the works she screened at the BFC/A?

LHS: Thanks to a New Frontiers/New Perspectives Grant, I was able to bring in Cauleen Smith. Her films tied in nicely with themes about black environmental activism and the arts. Each film she screened and talked about dealt with displacement of people and land issues in the U.S. However, the one I was most moved by was *The Fullness of Time*, which really put an Afrofuturist spin on Hurricane Katrina and its victims. In regards to how she used sound and imagery in that one, very experimental and moving.

NK: What are your favorite resources here at the BFC/A?

LHS: All of the resources at BFC/A are my favorite.

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film.

Though many critics peg Greenlee's film to be about a war against whites, Greenlee describes the film as a war of liberation of the poor of America, which goes beyond the issue of race. While the class-war film was consistently pulled from theatres across the United States because of the feared a revolutionary protest, Greenlee, along with a large audience, was able to view the film at IU Cinema.

Nzingha Kendall is a graduate student in AAADS and manages the public programming at the BFC/A.



Sam Greenlee
during an interview at
the BFC/A.
Photo by Leslie Houin

The Peter Davis Collection constitutes over thirty years of activities by Peter Davis as a producer, director, scriptwriter, cameraman and editor of documentary films on social and political issues. Davis' films include interviews with many South African activists, as well as revolutionaries throughout the world.

Peter Davis has produced over 30 full length documentary films and has contributed to the production of many others. During the 1970s, Davis began making films in South Africa and became deeply involved in the anti-apartheid movement. The South African material in the Peter Davis Collection not only spans the period of the most intensive struggle for human rights in that country, but also includes historical work dating from the

beginning of the century.

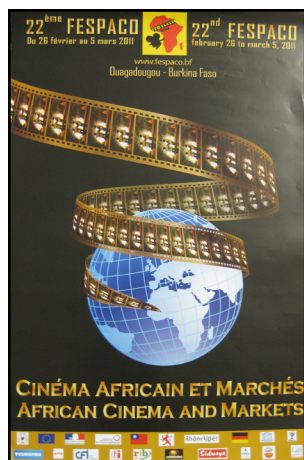
The Peter Davis films and sound recording are stored at Ruth Lilly Auxiliary Library Facility due to the large size of the collection. The Peter Davis Papers—photograph negatives and prints as well as documents connected with the production of Davis' films—are housed in the BFC/A at the Herman B. Wells Library. These documents trace the activities of this producer from the inception of a film idea to realization.

Until recently, most of the documents from the Davis Collection were kept in the same order as designated by Davis. Gabriel Gardner, a graduate assistant at the BFC/A,

has been working towards the consolidation of the Davis Collection this year. By organizing the collection by specific film topic and refining the EAD finding aids, Gardner has made the collection more efficient and user-friendly for research and improved speed of information retrieval. While the EAD finding aids will not be available for a few months, the archivists at the BFC/A are already able to help researchers find important information in a much more productive manner.

FESPACO Poster Acquisitions

Michael Martin, director of the BFC/A, attended the 22nd FESPACO in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso this past February and brought back a plethora of film posters for the Archive's collection. The archive processed approximately 100 posters which are now part of the film poster collection.



Encoded Archival Descriptions

Encoded Archival Descriptions (EAD) is the standard for encoding archival finding aids using Extensible Markup Language (XML). The standard is maintained in the Network Development and MARC Standards Office of the Library of Congress (LC) in partnership with the Society of American Archivists.

Created in 1993 at UC-Berkeley, EAD established a standard for describing collections held by archives and special collections, similar to the MARC standards for describing regular books.

Archivist Mary Huelsbeck and volunteer Hannah Caproon have worked to increase searching capabilities for researchers of the BFC/A



Gabriel recently graduated from IU with a Masters of Library Science. He plans to move to Duluth, Minnesota. The BFC/A wishes Gabriel the best of luck in his future endeavors!
Photo by Leslie Houin

collections by submitting EAD finding aids to the Digital Library Program (DLP) at Indiana University.

The DLP includes 10 repositories at IU and will be live in a few months. Researchers will be able to find archival information through a singular source, IU Libraries.

Hannah Caproon, MLS 2010 is a volunteer for the BFC/A.

TED TODDY ONLINE EXHIBITION

Recently, I had an opportunity to work with Omeka exhibit software to design an online exhibit for the Black Film Center/Archive at Indiana University, Bloomington. For the subject of this exhibit, I chose the Ted Toddy poster collection held at the archive, which consists of 12 one-sheet posters. The collection covers films produced by the Ted Toddy Pictures Company in the 1930s and 1940s. As mentioned in the exhibit introduction on the website, Toddy was a white, Southern-based producer of “race films.” The term race film refers to a genre of American independent films that was popular from about 1915 to 1950, from the popularization of film until the desegregation era. These films, which featured all black casts, were made to be shown in segregated theaters mainly in the South, which is main reason they waned in popularity around the time of the Civil Rights Movement. As with most low-budget and independent films of this era, a great many of these films have been lost and, in some cases, the promotional material is the only physical evidence we have of their existence. While these films, which covered a number of genres, tended to avoid social commentary, they nonetheless made a statement—they were the only place at the time where you could see black leading men and women.

by Stacey Doyle, BFC/A intern

Because of the limited information that exists about many of these films, as well as the way in which the genre is generally overlooked by mainstream film historians, I felt that an exhibit highlighting them would help to fill a gap in the general public’s knowledge. Also since the website is not bound by location and can be visited by those who do not have access to the archive, it will help to expand the reach of the collection. It serves as both informational tool and outreach for the archive, enabling the user to easy access to both a collection and its metadata.

Omeka is a free web-based, site builder that does not require any prior knowledge of html or other programming languages in order to operate. As such, it is ideal for archives that wish to have an online exhibit but lack a web programming staff. The site is simple and intuitive to use—you simply upload photographs of the items you wish

to display, and then enter associated metadata in Dublin Core. There is the ability to add as many sub-pages as you have space for, and the site will remain up until the administrator choses to delete it. A drawback to using the site is you must conform with a handful of set styles, which does not allow personalization or an adherence to the style of the main site. Still, it is a good way to quickly design an online exhibit that can be used by a wider audience without any additional cost to the archive in terms of server space.

All in all, I feel that the exhibit was a success. It broadens the reach of the archive, showcasing a segment of the BFC/A’s poster collection in a way that is easily accessible. The image quality is such that is really the next best thing to viewing the posters in person; even flaws are easily picked up. Most importantly, it helps give a visual context to this important—and often overlooked—movement in black film.

Stacey Doyle is a graduate student in MLS and is also a volunteer for the BFC/A.

David Wall Departs for USU

David Wall, staff member of the BFC/A, accepted the position of Assistant Professor of Visual and Media Studies at Utah State University in Logan, Utah.

Dr. Wall originates from London. He held the position of Director of Cultural Studies at Batley School of Art & Design until 2008, when he accepted a Visiting Professor position at Indiana University, for which he received two extensions to continue on until 2011.

The work and participation that Dr. Wall has put into the BFC/A has proved to be important for the organization’s growth. He has taken part in prestigious symposiums conducted by the BFC/A as well as other Archive related projects, most notably as the Book and Review Editor of *Black Camera*.

We wish David the best of luck in the beautiful state of Utah as he progresses in his professional career.

2010-2011 Programs & Activities at the BFC/A

Fall 2010

Instruction: Classes taught at the BFC/A by IU faculty

- *German Cultural History* [Prof. Brigitta Wagner]
- *Images of Blacks in Films: 1903-1950* [Prof. David Wall]
- *History of Race in the Americas* [Prof. Micol Seigel]
- *Repertoire Appraisal for Arts Managers* [Prof. Christopher Hunt]
- *Topics in Non-Western Literature: African Cinema and Politics* [Prof. Akin Adesokan] (including Wednesday night weekly screenings)
- *African American Cinematic Experience* [Prof. David Wall]

Publications

- *Black Camera, An International Film Journal*, Volume 2, Number 1 (Winter) 2010

Screenings/events held at and/or co-sponsored by the BFC/A

- Participated with other libraries and archives on campus in planning Archives and Special Collections Month in October. The theme was "Sustainability of Our Cultural Heritage: Preserving and Making Accessible Society's Digital Records".
- Showed home movie footage from the Black Film Center/Archive's collection during "Home Movie Day," October 17.
- Lent a hand painted Ghanaian movie poster from our collection to the IU Art Museum for its exhibit "African Reinventions: Re-used Materials in Popular Culture," September 25 – December 19.
- Gave a tour of the Black Film Center/Archive for IU Libraries staff, September 29.

Spring 2011

Instruction: Classes taught at the BFC/A by IU faculty

- *Human Rights/Social Movement* (2 sections) [Profs. Nicole Kousaleos & Paulette Lloyd]
- *National Cinemas* [Prof. Stephanie Deboer]
- *History of Theatre & Drama* [Prof. Amy Cook]
- *Art & Architecture of Pompeii* [Prof. James Franklin]
- *Contemporary Black Film* [David Wall]
- *Cinemas of the Black Diaspora* [Prof. Michael T. Martin]

Publications

- *Black Camera, An International Film Journal*, Volume 2, Number 2 (Spring) 2011

Screenings/events held at and/or co-sponsored by the BFC/A

- *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin* (2003), as part of the Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration, January 17.
- Co-sponsored the Haiti Film Festival held at the Buskirk-Chumley, January 23, 2011
- Co-sponsored, with the Bloomington Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc, a four part film series held at the Monroe County Public Library during February for Black History Month.
- *Black Dynamite* (2009) – screened for graduate students in AAADS and CMCL, February 25.
- Tour for participants in the Society of American Archivists Student Chapter conference "Preserving Our Cultural Heritage: a Conference for Graduate Students and Beginning Professionals in Archives, Rare Books, and Special Collections," March 6, 2011.
- *Sisters in Cinema* (2003) – screened in celebration of Women's History Month, March 11.
- *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1973) – featuring screenwriter Sam Greenlee – held at the IU Cinema, March 22, 2011.
- Hosted a screening of several films by artist/filmmaker/educator Cauleen Smith on March 23, 2011.
- *Sisters of the Screen: African Women in the Cinema* (2002) screened in celebration of Women's History Month, March 25.
- Co-sponsored a special preview screening of the film *Freedom Riders* (2011) by filmmaker Stanley Nelson at the IU Cinema, April 2.
- Hosted a screening of the film *The Day Diplomacy Died*, by filmmaker Bernie Dwyer, with CUBAmistad, April 12, 2011.
- Hosted a performance by artist/activist/writer Ashley Hunt entitled "Notes on the Emptying of a City" on April 18, 2011
- Co-sponsored a screening of the film *Aoki* (2009) with the Asian Culture Center on April 22.
- Screening of the film *Cry of Jazz* (1959) and discussion with filmmaker Edward Bland with the IU Cinema, April 29.



Call for submissions

Black Camera invites submissions for a special issue or section of a future issue devoted to a critical assessment of the film *Precious* and the novel *Push* by Sapphire (upon which *Precious* is based) to be published in Fall 2012.

Essays, book and film reviews, interviews, and commentaries will be considered. Essays should be 6,000-10,000 words, interviews 6,000 words, commentaries 1,000-2,000 words, and film reviews of *Precious* and book reviews of *Push* should be 500-1,500 words. Please submit completed essays, a 100-word abstract, a fifty-word biography, and a CV by October 25, 2011. Submissions should conform to the Chicago Manual of Style, 15th Edition.

Direct all questions, correspondence, and submissions to guest editors Suzette Spencer (University of Wisconsin, Madison) and Carlos Miranda (Yale University) at PRECIOUSJOURNALISSUE@GMAIL.COM

Black Camera Spring 2011

Beyond Normative: Sexuality and Eroticism in Black Film, Cinema, and Video

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summer film festivals

May

International Urban Film Festival
 Women of African Descent Film Festival
 Santa Cruz Film Festival 05-14
 Israel Film Festival 05-19
 Swansea Bay Film Festival 07-15
 Festival de Cannes 11-22
 Tupelo Film Festival 12-14
 Africa World Documentary Film Festival 12-15
 Helsinki African Film Festival 12-16
 Charleston International Film Festival 18-22
 Seattle International Film Festival 19-12 June
 New Media Film Festival 20-21
 Cheyenne International Film Festival 20-22
 Reggae Film Festival 23-27
 Bergen International Film Festival 25-08 June
 Mexico International Film Festival 27-29

June

African Diaspora International Film Festival
 Berkshire International Film Festival 02-05
 Kyiv International Film Festival 02-08
 Mendocino Film Festival 03-05
 Hollywood Black Film Festival 07-12
 Sheffield Doc/Fest 08-12
 Encounters South African International
 Documentary Festival 09-26
 D.C./Maryland/Northern Virginia (DMV)
 International Film Festival 10-12
 Queer Women of Color Film Festival 10-12
 Aruba International Film Festival 10-16
 Human Rights Watch
 International Film Festival 10-24
 Festival de cine africano de Tarifa (FCAT) 11-19
 Shanghai International Film Festival 11-19
 Las Vegas Film Festival 15-17
 Accra International Film Festival 15-19
 Edinburgh International Film Festival 15-26
 Frameline: San Francisco International
 LGBT Film Festival 16-26
 Los Angeles Film Festival 16-26
 San Francisco Black Film Festival 17-19
 Zanzibar International Film Festival 18-26
 Silverdocs 20-26
 Detroit Windsor International Film Festival 22-26
 Atlantic City International Film Festival 26-27
 Newark Black Film Festival 29-03 August

July

African Diaspora International Film Festival
 Revelation Perth International Film Festival
 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 01-09
 Galway Film Fleadh 05-10
 Jerusalem International Film Festival 07-16
 Outfest 07-17
 Indiana Black Expo Film Festival 09-10
 Eko International Film Festival 09-14
 Curtas Vila do Conde International
 Film Festival 09-17
 Maine International Film Festival 09-18
 Pula Film Festival 09-23
 Festival International Nuits d'Afrique 12-24
 Indianapolis International Film Festival 14-24
 New Zealand International Film Festival 14-31
 Belize International Film Festival 15-19
 Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival 17-25
 Durban International Film Festival 21-31
 Melbourne International Film Festival 21-07 August
 San Diego International Children's
 Film Festival 24-07 August
 Roxbury International Film Festival 28-31

August

New York International Latino Film Festival 02-07
 Locarno International Film Festival 03-13
 Armidale International Film Festival 05-07
 Santa Monica International Film Festival 07
 Martha's Vineyard African-American
 Film Festival 09-13
 Rhode Island International Film Festival 09-14
 Lodi International Film Festival 12-14
 New Zealand International Film Festival 14-31
 Norwegian International Film Festival 17-25
 Salt Lake City Film Festival 18-21
 Sausalito Film Festival 19-21
 Ottawa International Film Festival 21
 New York City International Film Festival 21-28
 Venice Film Festival 31-10 September



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Website: <http://www.indiana.edu/~bfca/>
Blog: blackfilmcenterarchive.wordpress.com/

The Black Film Center/Archive

The BFC/A was founded in 1981 and was the first repository for the collection and preservation of films and related materials by and about African Americans. Since that time, its collections have grown and its scope has broadened to include films from the other geographical sites in the African Diaspora. Our collection, which features many independent filmmakers, highlights the work of black writers, actors, producers, directors, and musicians in all aspects of film production.

Objectives

To promote scholarship on black film and serve as a resource for scholars, researchers, students, and the general public.

To preserve and expand the collection of historically and culturally significant films by and about black people.

To encourage film activity by independent black filmmakers.

To undertake and encourage research on the history, impact, theory and aesthetics of black film traditions.

Collections

All collections may be accessed by scholars, students, and the general public.

Films

As a research archive, the BFC/A does not circulate any part of its film collections. The BFC/A also does not provide copies of any films in its collection. Researchers are invited to schedule appointments to view films on VHS or DVD on the archive's premises.

The film collection consists of over 2,000 historic and contemporary Hollywood, international, and independent films dating from the advent of the motion picture industry to the present. Genres include comedies, documentary, animation, dramas and musicals, and newsreels in 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, videocassette and DVD formats.

Interviews

The BFC/A maintains a large collection of interviews with filmmakers, screenwriters, and actors/actresses. Among them with Bill Gunn, William Greaves, Spike Lee, St. Clair Bourne, Michelle Parkerson, Haile Gerima, Maya Angelou, Tina Andrews, Julie Dash, Melvin Van Peebles, Joseph Ramaka, Yoruba Richen, and donnie l. betts.