

STAY BLACK IN YOUR HEART

The Serious Side Of Richard Pryor

By GERTRUDE GIPSON

Making people laugh has been a way of life with Richard Pryor since his career started during his high school days at Central High in Peoria, Illinois where he managed to build up his reputation as an incurable practical joker and punster, something which has certainly remained with him throughout the years and now, on a highly successful basis.

This all ran through my mind as I drove up to his massive 3 1/2 acre estate in Northridge where upon announcing yourself you are admitted through special electric iron gates that display numerous fruit trees, a rambling rustic, Spanish, ranch style home, a huge swimming pool, large tennis court, a stable for horses (he has one miniature pony) a gift from producer Bert Sugarman.

As I drove around the back I noticed a completely furnished guest home where Richard lived while waiting for the main house to become livable. A beautiful well built doll house sits right in the front of the former Wrigley estate which serves as a playhouse for two of Richard's children who visit their father occasionally.

Greeting me upon arrival was beautiful actress Pam Grier, the new and "very serious" love in Pryor's life. Warmly smiling, speaking softly she ushered me upstairs to the office, den and all around working room of Richard Pryor.

Pam offered fresh carrot or apple juice, "we make it ourselves" she said. I settled for a mixture of carrot and apple juice. Before leaving the room Pam explained how pleased she was with the new plush orange carpet they had recently put in and how things were now beginning to shape up. "We are in no hurry just casually shop and select with care the several things we will need to furnish the home." She politely excused herself and I waited for Richard.

Entering the room, decked in blue jeans with a hole in the leg, a pullover sweater; Richard looked healthy and thin and quipped, "I always thought Niggers were late but damn, you are right on time."

Starting immediately with the interview I asked, how does it feel to be successful and rich? "...Do you mean rich like millions of dollars, being financially secure for the rest of your life?" he asked. "No I have not reached that

point in my life." I was concerned with Pryor's career a few years ago when he simply faded out of the show-biz scene altogether and we asked about that.

"I just didn't like what was happening with my life I was leading to self destruction at the time, so I just quit. I had always been taught from my parents, to believe in myself, whatever the problem is go after it, straighten it out and that's what I did, fortunately I come from strong roots."

Richard Pryor is hot property now and is well aware of this, he is in constant demand. He emerges as a "new" Richard Pryor in his latest movie "Which Way Is Up," which just completed filming. It's a satirical comedy about the suc-

cess and failures of working people bucking the system in a small California community. Lightning", the story of Wendell Schoot, America's first black racing car driver, but he was quick to add the names of other actresses who he feels have great dramatic ability and who have greatly impressed him. All appeared in "Which Way Is Up." Margaret Avery, Lonette McKee, Gloria Edwards and Marilyn Coleman.

We wanted to know why he is so involved in films suddenly. "I have been in this business 17 years, I have worked hard, the opportunity came and fortunately I was prepared. Pryor has appeared in numerous films but has starred in two "Greased Lightning" - and "Which Way Is Up."

Speaking about his following I mentioned he had acquired a somewhat new following, he was

too, and just for the records I am one of the few niggers Redd Foxx does not owe." He added also that Bardi Ali was a big help during those days.

Speaking of his childhood days in Peoria, he said, "I would never want my children to go through the experiences I had, raised in a house of prostitution, I learned many things and it took many years to get a lot of memories out of my system, and a lot of things that I have learned have helped me in life."

My family always tried to give me the best and taught me to be mannerable. They never approved of me using four letter words, my grandmother today, jumps all over me when I do."

Speaking of his love life he

handles all or most of his business. "Since David has been with me, everything has seemingly fallen in place, he is a real God send." Unlike business agents or representatives, Richard adds Franklin gets a weekly salary and is not concerned with a percentage of his gigs.

I am not just concerned with an image as a Hollywood syndrome. You must have the guts to say NO, it's not gonna be the end of the world, I knew that when I walked off that stage in Vegas, it wasn't all over because I had God in my heart. Don't trust too many white folks, stay black in your heart, keep your black friends around you always, cause white folks will make you feel that everything is always alright and then they will chop your head off."

There is a lot of warmth and sincerity about Richard Pryor. He has and always will have compassion for his fellowman. Lies he says will destroy you, and you can never be the same.

Endurance has been the key to success for Richard Pryor, and promoting understanding through laughter has been the link.

Richard has his head in the "straight ahead direction" and has many things to prove it. Three Grammys consecutively for his hit albums. He received the NATRA Award for the Comedian of the Year. An Emmy award as a writer for the Lily Tomlin Special. The Writers Guild and American Academy of Humor Award for his contributions to the script "Blazing Saddles." and numerous other awards.

His movie career really took an upward stride with his 1972 role as "Piano Man" in "Lady Sings The Blues."

Richard Pryor is HOT and from the way it looks, it's gonna be that way for many more years to come.



RICHARD PRYOR — TIMES THREE — (l) Pryor as Leroy Jones ... (c) Pryor as Rufus Jones, (R) "Whirl", Sunday, March 20,

cess and failures of working people bucking the system in a small California community.

Directed by Michael Scultz who Richard praises highly, in his latest role there are no restrictions on the way he performs and Richard adds, "I wouldn't accept the role any other way," he must have his freedom of words and changes the dialogue as his inventive mind suggests.

Pryor plays three characters (a first for him) and when asked about his favorite actress, he readily answered Pam Grier; they worked together in "Greased

quick to disagree and said, "I developed my following by playing the small niteries around the city, mostly black, previously my audience was at least 30% white but now I relate to the black situations and they are my biggest supporters, they buy my records, sell out my concerts and catch my performances wherever I am."

He doesn't mind when people compare him with Redd Foxx he said, "Redd was helpful in the beginning of my career, when I was developing my act doing the street talk, as they call it, he let me work the club and I got paid

admitted he had been married twice, first when he was 20. About marrying again he said, "I am thinking seriously about marriage and I find it quite disturbing. Any woman I have ever been with, I really loved white, black or whatever." About his newest, Pam Grier, he added, "I adore her, she has meant so much in my life. We do many things together, playing tennis, shopping or whatever. She is a definite asset in my life and has a prominent part in my daily life."

Richard speaks highly of David Franklin, an Atlanta attorney who



Richard Pryor