

BLACK POWER: THEN AND NOW

The CRISIS

CELEBRATING
100 YEARS
1910-2010

[**The Hollywood Issue**]

Dispatches From

TINSELTOWN

The Power & Politics

Breaking Down
The Box Office

**Lincoln
Heights:**
A Rare
Black TV
Drama

What's So
Precious
About "Precious"?

thecrisismagazine.com

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C. W. HETZEL



Reel Talent

Hollywood is hardly the only place to find talented filmmakers.

“**W**

hat American artist has not caricatured us? What wit has not laughed at us in our wretchedness? Has not ridiculed and condemned

us?” Those were the thoughts of a group of dissatisfied Black New Yorkers on the eve of the Civil War, and though more than 100 years have passed, Black images in art and film continue to stir strong sentiments. Consider, for example, the continuing debate over films such as *Precious* and *The Blind Side*.

For the most part, controversy and conversation surround well-funded, mass-marketed fare, overshadowing equally thoughtful work that also deserves our careful attention. Many worthwhile films are made independently, beyond the boundaries of Hollywood convention and constraints. Some of the most provocative and satisfying Black films, including Charles Burnett’s *Killer of Sheep*, Julie Dash’s *Daughters of the Dust* and Haile Gerima’s *Ashes and Embers* are independent creations.

Just as noteworthy films about Black subjects are not solely of interest to Black audiences, nor are they solely the productions of Black filmmakers. Here is a highlight reel of screen artists and activists whose work shows that excellence is not easily categorized. Their output ranges from hard-hitting documentaries, to straightforward narratives, to experimental creations that resemble jazz and abstract art as much as they resemble a typical film.



Benjamin Franzen and Kembrew McLeod

Names: Benjamin Franzen and Kembrew McLeod
Hometowns: Dubuque, Iowa and Virginia Beach, Va.
Base of Operations: Atlanta, Ga. and Iowa City, Iowa
Our Works Include: *Freedom of Expression* (educational documentary, Media Education Foundation)
Current Project: *Copyright Criminals* (broadcast documentary, PBS)
Our Mission: *Copyright Criminals* examines the creative and commercial value of musical sampling, including the related debates over artistic expression, copyright law and (of course) money. The film showcases many of hip-hop music’s early figures such as Public Enemy, De La Soul, and Digital Underground, and also provides an in-depth look at artists who have been sampled, such as Clyde Stubblefield (James Brown’s drummer and the world’s most sampled musician), as well as commentary by another highly sampled musician, funk legend George Clinton.
Filmmaker(s) who influenced us most: Jean-Luc Godard and the Maysles Brothers
A good film we’ve watched lately (or a good film we watch often): *F for Fake*, directed by Orson Welles
To Find Out More:
www.copyrightcriminals.com

COURTESY BEN FRANZEN



Yvonne Welbon

Name: Yvonne Welbon

Hometown: Chicago

Base of Operations: I am currently the Chair of the Journalism and Media Studies Department at Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, N.C.

My Works Include: (As director, producer, writer): *Monique* (1991), *The Cinematic Jazz of Julie Dash* (1992), *Sisters in the Life: First Love* (1993), *Missing Relations* (1994), *Remembering Wei-Yi Fang*, *Remembering Myself* (1996), *Split Screen* (TV series, 1997-1999), *Living With Pride: Ruth C. Ellis @ 100* (1999), *The Taste of Dirt* (2002), *Sisters in Cinema* (2003)

(As producer): *Scale: Measuring Might in the Media Age* (2008) (producer), *Garbage! The Revolution Starts at Home* (2007) (executive producer), *The Water Front* (2007) (associate producer), *Stray Dogs* (2001) (producer).

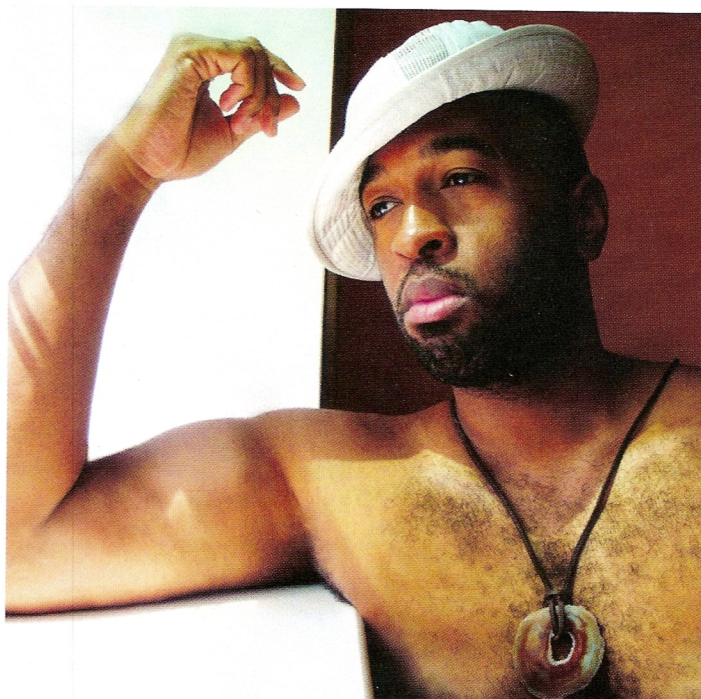
Current Project(s): *Stephanie's Story* "working title" (HD, Digital, Animation, 2012)—Experimental Black lesbian docudrama series inspired by true Chicago stories. (In-development) *Sisters in the Life: Black Lesbian Film and Video Artists* (Digital Video, 2011). A documentary that offers a historical overview of the lives and the films of out African American lesbian media makers from the late 1980s to today. (In Production)

My Mission: My body of work demonstrates my commitment to social equality in media representation, my love for sharing often little-known stories of ordinary and extraordinary people, and my belief that the personal is political.

Filmmaker(s) who influenced me most: Euzhan Palcy, Julie Dash, Zeinabu irene Davis, Cheryl Dunye, Jim McBride, Su Friedrich, Alan Berliner, Marlon Riggs, Wong Kar-Wai and Edward Yang.

A good film I've watched lately (or a good film I watch often): *Mississippi Damned*

To Find Out More: www.sistersincinema.com



David Barclay Moore

Name: David Barclay Moore

Hometown: I was born and raised in a small town in Missouri but I have lived and worked in New York City for the past 14 years.

Base of Operations: New York City

My Works Include: *Realness* (2009), a documentary about a Black Brooklyn basketball player who is changing gender from female to male; *Dr. Al's Rebels* (2009), a documentary about a Black male couple in Washington, D.C., who are raising three young children while running a Black gay softball team.

Current Projects: *Race & Sex* (2010), a documentary about exploitation and entrepreneurship among Black men in the adult film industry; *Harlemite* (2010), a documentary about success and failure among Black men; *Homosexuality and the Black Church* (2011), a documentary feature exploring the issues, tensions and contradictions Black gay men face in the religious Black community.

My Mission: 1) To explore and reveal the mystery & mythology of Black men through questioning who Black men truly are. 2) To attempt to interpret the dialogues between Black cultures and other cultures and suggest how these dialogues affect the development of those cultures and the creation of others.

Filmmaker(s) who influenced me most: George Lucas, Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, David Lynch, Spike Lee, Werner Herzog, Errol Morris.

A good film I've watched lately (or a good film I watch often): A good film that I watched lately is *Morocco* (1930) by Joseph Von Sternberg, starring Marlene Dietrich and Gary Cooper. While not a great film, the mood of romance and abandon that permeates it, along with Dietrich's fascinating screen persona, makes *Morocco* a pleasing confection. One of my favorite films is David Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), which I often watch. Besides being beautiful to look at, I have always admired how Lean managed to tell such an intensely personal story amid such epic surroundings. I would love to accomplish the same some day. And many of the Middle Eastern politics this film deals with are, on the whole, still relevant today. Hmmm. With these two particular films in mind, perhaps I should visit the desert.

To Find Out More: www.davidbarclaymoore.com and www.mobottomroad.com.