

## THE CARRIER PIGEON

FEBRUARY 12, 2007

## WELCOME TO THE CARRIER PIGEON

## Upcoming One Tree Hill Appearance

Be sure to catch Shawn as Principal Turner on the February 14th episode of "One Tree Hill" entitled "Sad Songs For Dirty Lovers."

On Tree Hill airs on the CW on Wednesdays at 9 pm.

It's February and that means it's Black History Month. Americans have been recognizing Black History Month annually since 1926 when Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded Negro History Week as a way of bringing attention to the contributions of Blacks in America. In that same spirit we want to salute author/filmmaker Oscar Micheaux, a pioneer who forged the blueprint for many of the minority artists working today.

A child of former slaves, as a young man, Micheaux wrote stories and formed his own publishing company to buy his books and sell them door to door. When motion pictures came into being, he saw it as a vehicle to tell his stories. He went on to form his own movie pro-

duction company and in 1919 became the first African-American to produce a film. He was also the first to have them shown in "white" movie theaters. Much of his work came from autobiographical elements. In 1924, he introduced the moviegoing public to the great Paul Robeson in a film entitled "Body and Soul."

Micheaux made it a point to depict African-Americans in a positive light. His film, "Within our Gates," directly combated the racism depicted in D.W. Griffiths cinematically touted "The Birth of a Nation."

Between 1919 and 1948 Oscar Micheaux wrote, produced, and directed forty-four fea-

ture length films and wrote seven novels. The Producers Guild of America (PGA) called him "The most prolific black-if not the most prolific filmmaker in American cinema." And The **Oscar Micheaux Award** is presented each year by the PGA.

Many argue that his films were flawed due to budgetary constraints and lack of resources. However, his artistic vision in telling stories that rebuked the racial attitudes of the time cannot be denied. Oscar Micheaux's efforts paved the way for future black directors like Gordon Parks, Charles Burnett, and Spike Lee.

## LAST KING OF SCOTLAND...A REVIEW

www.foxsearchlight.com/lastkingofscotland/



By: *Bridget Shepard*  
AKA BGS

As I cautiously enter a new realm of writing, Film Critique 101, I have to begin with the following reviewer's disclaimer... wait, can I have a disclaimer, umm, yeah, I guess I can because it's my column.

Okay, I have to admit that as an actress at heart, when I see a film in which the lead actors completely submerge themselves in a performance, I get all goosebumpy." And after seeing the Fox Searchlight Production of *The Last King of Scotland* I had one of those experiences....

That said, let me begin with a myth that I found during my research about Idi Amin, the Ugandan President about whom the film is based. The myth states that in his effort to see

what it would take to be "President for Life" (a title that he later proclaimed himself to be during his reign), he sought the advice of an Ugandan witch-doctor who told him that in order to accomplish this task, he had to eat the heart of someone he loved dearly. It is then said that Amin ate the heart of his own son. Now in reality Amin's son had actually and mysteriously disappeared around this same time....

One might think the aforementioned scenario can't be anything but a myth, but after seeing the film and taking an in depth look at the man himself, and realizing that over 300,000 Ugandans were killed during his presidential term (1971-1979), I am left with the thought that Amin eating his own son's heart may not be far from the truth.

Also based on my research and the fact that thousands of Ugandan men, women, and children were brutally, horrifically, and in many cases, inhumanely

slaughtered on Amin's orders, I can't help but wonder if one would think of him as a psychopath obsessed with power or a tragic sufferer of what modern day doctors have labeled as bi-polar disorder. According to the film, I am inclined to say that both scenarios are possible.

Set amidst the beautiful backdrop of Uganda, *The Last King of Scotland* is both a wonderful demonstration of the life of a powerful dictator as well as a chilling look at a man clearly suffering with dual realities. No, not a battle between his own reality and the world's reality, but a three-way battle consisting of a. his reality, b. his personal deluded reality, and c. the world's reality. I mean he totally believed that he was justified in his actions no matter how inhumane and senseless. He believed he was fighting for a better Uganda.

Brought amazingly back to life by a true gentle giant of a man Forrest Whitaker, Amin is both a charis-

matic charmer and a frightening, perfectly paranoid president. Fun and personable one minute, terrifically terrifying the next. He is both a hero to his people and his Uganda, as well as a man that lived his personal life practicing many customs held dear to Scottish Europeans -- from entertaining guests in a kilt playing a bagpipe, to naming two of his, ah, African sons Campbell and McKenzie.

From the first few seconds of his back (yeah, his back, as in we haven't even seen his face yet, back) Whitaker exhibits the power of a man obsessed. A man who truly believes he is just in his actions, and a true voice of his people, or in his words, "I am you and you are me."



In the same shot, there are two splashes of white

in a sea of black. One of those splashes of white is Scottish doctor Nicolas Galligan, truthfully portrayed (although the charac-

## LAST KING OF SCOTLAND REVIEW CONTINUED

ter was fictional) by new comer James McAvoy. Galligan is the man who is inadvertently wooed into medical servitude by, let's see, I'll call him Amin number 1, the charismatic and funny charmer.



To Galligan, this Amin is the image of a leader convicted to bringing Uganda back to power and a possible friend. This is the Amin that treats him like his own son catering to his every need and the offerer of his dream job as his personal doctor. A job, in which Galligan quickly accepts. It is ultimately, however, Amin number 2, the perfectly paranoid torturous tyrant of terror that Galligan later learns to both fear and despise.

The events surrounding this delicate balance of friendship and fear, and power and manipulation provide the catalyst in which Whitaker and McAvoy find a creative

chemistry that lulls the viewer into this seemingly perfect relationship. They are two men, Amin and his Dr. Galligan, who at the onset, build their bond based on trust and a mutual respect for one another's opinions and honesty of conversation. It is this same trust and honesty that lead Galligan, through a series of events, to see Amin for the monster he is.

Whitaker's uncanny ability to become two completely different people with just a look or a slight laugh in the same scene within seconds (oh my gosh, here come the goosebumps...) is truly transcendental. And McAvoy's amazing ability to walk the thin line of showing both friendship and fear, work extraordinarily well in a film that takes the audience on a journey into the life and mind of a, as he was described in the media, madman....

The film has not only enabled Forrest to win both the Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild Awards for Best Actor

in a Motion Picture, but it has also garnered him a nomination for Best Actor in the Crème de la Crème of awards shows, the Golden Ticket, or in this case, the golden bald man, Oscar. Now why James didn't receive any award nominations, is beyond me, but then again who am I? That's probably an article for another time, "Why the Actors I Believe Should be Nominated for Awards Aren't: A Mystery Among Us," hmmm....

Anyway, if you've found yourself disappointed and desperately longing for a trip to the box office that is both mesmerizing and memorable – if not for Forrest's performance alone – then The Last King of Scotland is well worth the money. For me, it was, like I said, I got all "goosebumpy." If you are looking to be simply entertained and don't mind exceptionally rich actors ackin' – my term for actors just delivering lines and not having an understanding of the true essence of their character – then it's not. It's just that

simple. One thing however, is certain. The Last King of Scotland is a welcome reminder that there are treasures among the current mediocrity of filmmaking that is the Hollywood of today.



Forrest Whitaker is Idi Amin in Fox Searchlight's Production of "The Last King of Scotland."



The man himself, Idi Amin Dada.

**PIGEON'S POINT...**

Like the opening article about the achievements of Oscar Micheaux, I feel we are in a renaissance period of sorts. A period where the innovative forward thinker is set to reap huge rewards. What am I talking about? The mastery of technology. Micheaux struggled in his day to raise money for films, yet through hard work and business savvy, he was able to make and self distribute his own films. Now artists of every background have a plethora

of outlets and platforms by which to tell their stories. And they too have the ability to do it independent of the studios. If you have a decent computer, good communication skills, and a desire to create, then the sky's the limit. Right now the media industry is in a delphic state with so many conglomerates racing to figure out a means to control the circulation of information while at the same time maximizing their return on investment.

Platforms are thrown together ad hoc in the attempt to capitalize on consumer tastes and demands. The explosion of sites like YouTube and Myspace represent this paradigm shift. Audience dissolution and fragmentation have created a vast array of opportunities for new media and YouTube along with Myspace have best capitalized on this reality. Technology has leveled the playing field for the independent artist and like Baskin

Robbins, people want to be able to taste a multiple of flavors, i.e see a variety of cultures on television and film. The only ones who will lead in this new era of communication are those that master the new technology. Many times in the rush to create the final product, individuals forget to do their homework. And now with the information at one's fingertips, the only barrier is oneself.

**CARRIER PIGEON PERSON OF THE MONTH**

[www.thethanksranks.com](http://www.thethanksranks.com)

[www.blogtalkradio.com/thethanksranks](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/thethanksranks)



Speaking of My Space, do you ever have moments when you sit

back and realize that one of those "little things" in life made you happy, changed you in some way, even if only for a moment?

Well, that's what the Carrier Pigeon's first Person of

the Month, Lisa Brathwaite, or more recently known as Grateful Lisa, did when she created her blog and My Space page, The Thanks Ranks. Here's what Lisa says led her to creation.

As she approached her 35th birthday in October 2006, she found herself presented with two choices: 1) Zero in on and lament about what she had not done with her life and why

she wasn't fully where she had wanted to be by this time or 2) Show some gratitude for her life, focus on her blessings and embrace that she is a work in progress who is being touched by wonderful people, places, things, and experiences every day.

She chose option #2, and her blog was born out of that decision. She's grateful, and wants to recognize daily that which has enriched her life—for a rea-

son, a season, or a lifetime.

Well Grateful Lisa, thank you for being our first, Person of the Month and congrats for the success of The Thanks Ranks!

"If you consciously put yourself on alert for it, every day we encounter people, places, things or experiences that make our day a little brighter."  
— Grateful Lisa  
Tune in to Thanks Ranks Radio, every Thursday at 3.

Visit us on the Web at  
[www.shawnshepard.com](http://www.shawnshepard.com)

## SES PRODUCTIONS

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**SES Productions**



Upcoming One Tree Hill appearances on:  
Wednesday, February 14th — “Sad Songs for  
Dirty Lovers”

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