

The Museum of Modern Art

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11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 956-6100 Cable: Modernart

ED BLAND EXPLORING AMERICAN CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Ed Bland began his cinematic exploration of American cultural transformations in his first film, The Cry of Jazz. Margareta Akermark, Associate Director of the Department of Film for The Museum of Modern Art where the film is being featured in its current program, states, "The film, produced in 1958, was prophetic in anticipating the black anger and nationalism of the 60's and 70's." In devoting 27" of copy to its review in 1960, Kenneth Tynan wrote, "The Cry of Jazz does not really belong to the history of cinematic art, but it assuredly belongs to history; it is the first film in which the American Negro has issued a direct challenge to the white..." The film's screening at the Museum will include an analysis by Mr. Bland of how the power strictures imposed on black society contributed to the creation of "a futureless future - the soul of jazz, and how such a situation contains the seeds of a new American culture." A native of Chicago, Mr. Bland is also a composer and arranger of serious music, jazz and soul music, and is the product of the life he portrays.

At the time of the Tynan review Mr. Bland said, "...sooner or later they (Northern liberals) will have to accept -with humility - the idea that the Negro is going to be the next American hero." The title of Ed Bland's new full-length film, soon to go into production is - The American Hero, which "concerns itself with the type of action necessary to cause significant modification of society's institutions without resorting to violence or pacifism. It is a type of action anyone can follow. The breeding ground for this type of action exists in black life because of the disadvantageous power position blacks find themselves in." The setting for this film is the television industry - today.

Mr. Bland's TV and film credits include that of musical consultant of the CBS Camera 3 program Really The Country Blues, script consultant on Shirley Clark's The Cool World, working with Ben Maddow on the feature film An Affair of The Skin - to mention a few from an extensive list.

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In addition to his film work, Mr. Bland is Program Director, for the fourth season, of The Museum of Modern Art's "Jazz in The Garden" concerts. In selecting the series of programs he offers a broad view of current musical styles, represented by new young talents and older musicians who are having an enormous impact on the emerging young musicians, as well as some of the attempts that have been made to synthesize jazz, rock, blues and folk music.

The Museum's new Summergarden weekends are also under Mr. Bland's direction. The Sculpture Garden is open free to the public every Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening, and the program has featured a variety of musical entertainment - from Elizabethan ballads to aerial dances performed to the tape recorded sounds of whales.

Ed Bland received his early training in music at The University of Chicago where he studied musicology and philosophy - "I was interested in using philosophy to get a more fundamental grasp of music and its function in the world. John Dewey's instrumentalism was most useful in this regard; it was also useful in terms of defining some fundamental problems of being black. I still read Dewey."

After studying musical composition with John Becker and Wallingford Riegger, Mr. Bland left Chicago for New York and has worked as composer, arranger, and producer for Al Hirt, Country Joe and The Fish, Lionel Hampton, Junior Wells, Richie Havens and Clark Terry, among others. In recent months he has conducted his own compositions and arrangements for recording sessions with Dizzy Gillespie, The Hesitations and Barry Melton. He was a producer at GWP Records and was instrumental in the execution of GWP's Astrological Music Series. He is currently producing records independently.

For additional information contact Joan Wallace, Coordinator of Press Services, and Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53 St., New York, NY. Telephone: (212) 956-7297, -7501
