

## ARTS / CULTURE

## Blues with a smile



Shaun Verreault, Safwan Javed, Earl Pereira

### Wide Mouth Mason delivers the goods at the Marquee

BY GREG MCFARLANE

Ever since the release of the single "Midnight Rain", Wide Mouth Mason has generally been considered one of Canada's best young bands.

Last Friday night at the Marquee, they cemented that fact.

The blues artists rattled through their handful of hits and

other songs, including covers of "Fever" and Jimi Hendrix's "Voodoo Chile", to a more than appreciative crowd.

The free condoms being handed out at the door made me leery about the goings on inside, but the only thing I found was good, solid music.

What sets Wide Mouth Mason apart from other bands isn't so much their music — although few Canadian bands play the blues as hard — but their stage presence.

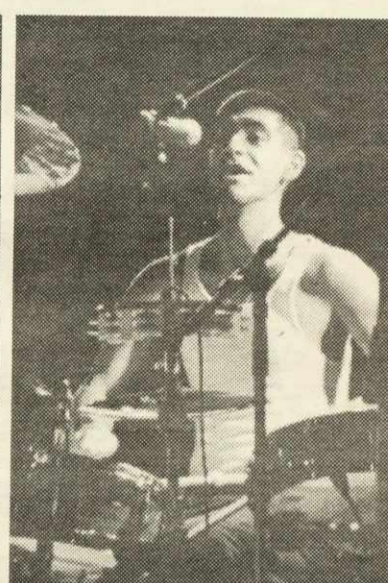
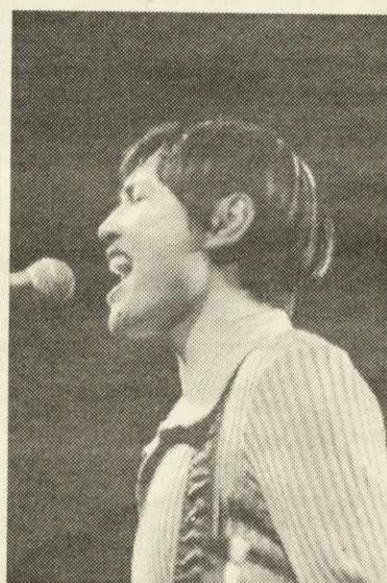
The threesome genuinely have fun when they perform. Bassist Earl Pereira soaks up every moment with a smile, and guitarist and lead vocalist Shaun Verreault plays and sings with a raw emotion,

whether he's picking with his fingers or his teeth.

Testament to the band's pleasure was the size of the crowd at the Marquee. Most blues bands, unless extremely well known, attract relatively small crowds. But the club was jam-packed to see Mason, showing the band's wide appeal. Veering into rock, jazz and pop is standard fare for the trio, but make no mistake, underneath everything they do lies an intensity and energy that comes from the blues.

When they left the stage last Friday, Pereira smiled and said, "We hope to see you this summer."

If that performance was any indication, you'd better hope so too.



## From Birth of a Nation to Blaxploitation

### Dalhousie Art Gallery lecture traces the evolution of Black cinema and Blacks in cinema

BY KARAN SHETTY

As one who considers himself a genuine film buff, I have to admit with some embarrassment that I know appallingly little about Black cinema — not just African-American cinema but African-British, Caribbean and sub-Saharan African cinema as well. Not quite enough is written about Black films in magazines and journals and those films that garner any

attention at all often reinforce white stereotypes about Black culture.

Therefore it was with rapt attention that I listened to Black filmmaker, critic and curator Cameron Bailey give a lecture at the Dalhousie Art Gallery as part of a series covering the work of Black filmmakers from three continents.

An extremely eloquent speaker, the British-born, Barbados-raised, Toronto-residing Bailey not only has a commanding,

comprehensive knowledge of film but also has the first-hand experience to back up this knowledge.

Entitled "Four Ports in the Black Atlantic: The Reach of Diasporan Film", Bailey's lecture traced the evolution of Black cinema and Blacks in cinema from the early demeaning portrayals of Blacks in Thomas Edison's, experimental films (*The Watermelon Eating Contest*) and D.W. Griffith's landmark (yet horribly racist) *Birth of a Nation* to the post-colonial films of Central Africa to the socially-conscious films of Melvin Van Peebles and Spike Lee.

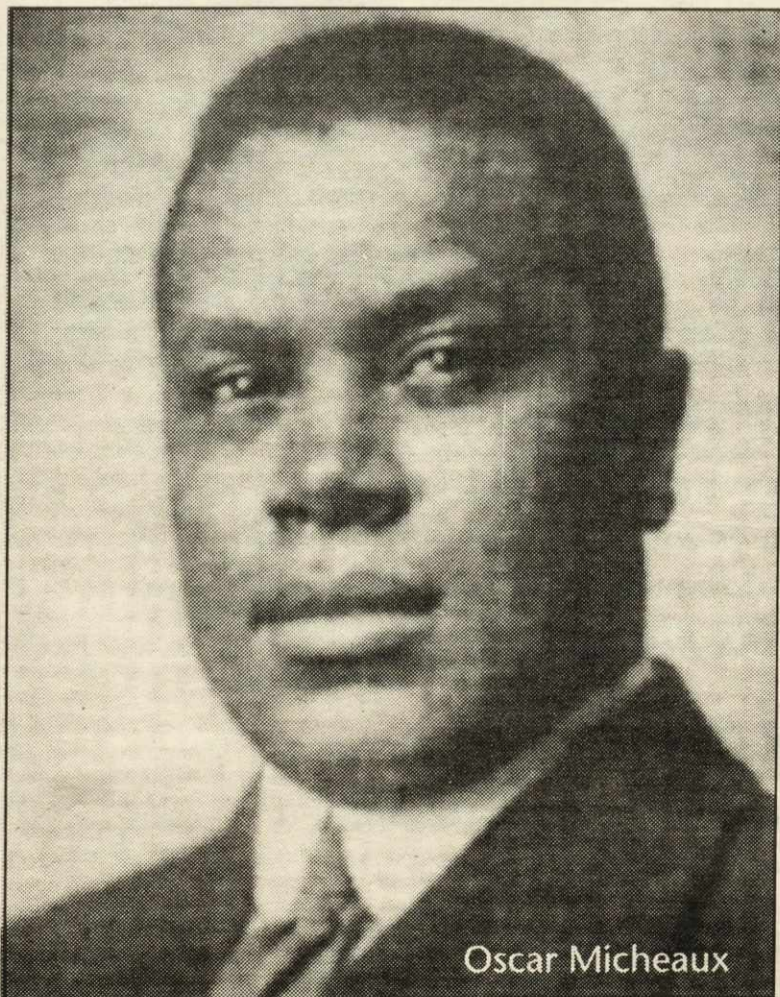
The word diaspora in the title of the lecture, originally used to refer to the expulsion of Jews from Zion thousands of years ago, is used in this context to refer to the scattering of Blacks across the vast expanse of the Atlantic as a result of the slave trade. Each of the places where these slaves were forcibly expatriated developed its own unique culture which is reflected in the differences in their cinema.

One of the strengths of Bailey's lecture was his ability to describe the impact of social development on the development of cinema in each of these regions. Bailey described the identity crisis of Black Brits and its effect on their cinema; he described the exploitative township films of South Africa and the equally exploitative Blaxploitation films of 1970s America; he also described the positive effect of Britain's Brixton riots on promoting

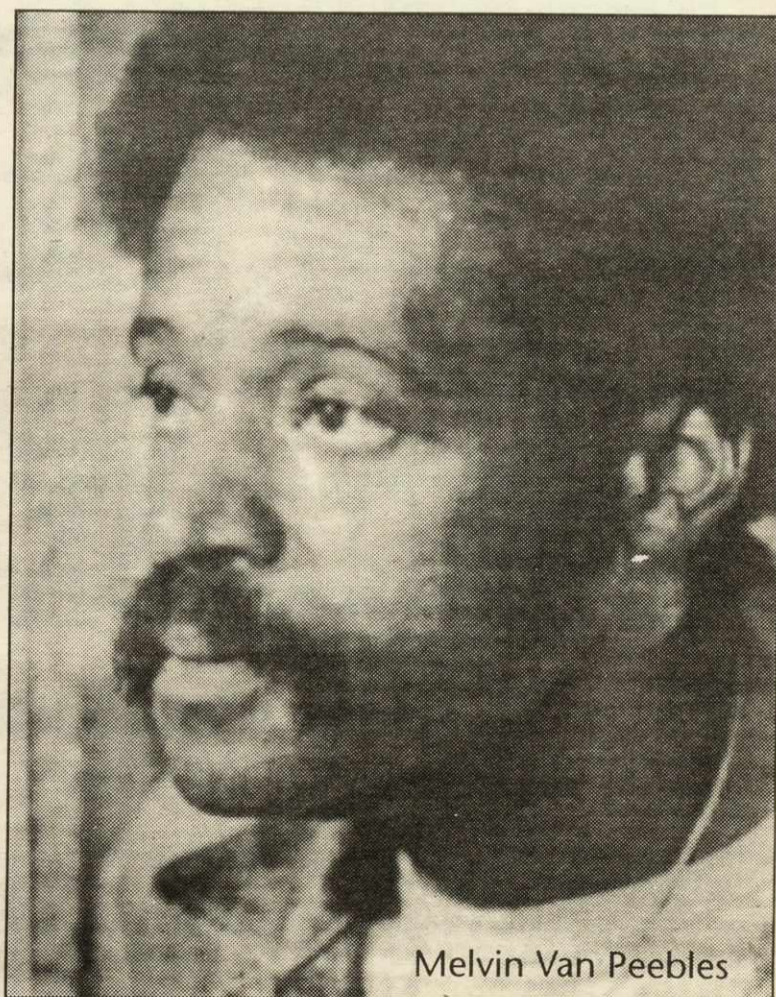
multiculturalism in that country.

The series of which Bailey's lecture was a part, *Taking the Helm: Black Filmmakers from Three Continents*, showcased many of the films he discussed in his lecture. The classic Senegalese film *Touki Bouki* (Djibril Diop Mambety), the British film *Looking for Langston* (Isaac Julien), the Canadian film *Against the Tide: The Jones Family* (Sylvia Hamilton) and the Oscar Micheaux film *Body and Soul*

starring legendary African American actor Paul Robeson, are just a few of the films that were screened at the Dalhousie Art Gallery over the last few weeks. Yet to come are *Classified X* (Melvin Van Peebles, USA/France, Mar. 24) and *The Planet of Junior Brown* (Clement Virgo, Canada, Mar. 31). Screenings are on Wednesdays at 12:30pm and 8:30pm. Admission to these films is free but donations are gratefully accepted.



Oscar Micheaux



Melvin Van Peebles