

Says OLIVER SAMUELS, whose new, expensive videos are being gobbled up... N Oliver Samuel

'I've not sold out to the upper classes

OLIVER SAMUELS insists that he has not sold out to the upper classes. What he is saying, in other words, is that he has not forsaken the masses whose devotion has been like the wind under his wings all these years.

But, why would anyone think that lovable, rustic, St. Mary-

born Oliver has forsaken his beloved masses?

It was triggered by the recent release of the new four-volume *Oliver* series on videocassettes. It's not the first time Oliver has gone video, but the first time it is a series done for local television that has taken the reverse route, being originally released strictly on videocassettes at \$370 each.

By Balford Henry

Now \$370 is a lot of money for poor people to pay for a video with two half-hour episodes. But, the videos are being gobbled up so fast, especially the first volume, it's hard to believe that we are still in an economic crisis.

Obviously, the buyers are mainly middle and upper class and, therefore, the question readily comes to mind: Has he kicked himself upstairs and forgotten his loyal fans?

Always loyal

"I want you, please to emphasize that I've not left my people and I will never leave them out. There is no truth in that," he answered, as we discussed the matter on the telephone last week.

But he explained: "You cannot live in a world that requires that you spend money, when you don't have money to spend. A lot of artistes get popular and because they don't take an interest in the business side of things, in later years they disappear into oblivion and abject poverty. I don't want that to happen to me."

He says that he is sure that the people who have supported him over the years will await the television release of the series, if they can't afford the video: "It's the people who can afford it who would usually make comments like those. I thrive on poor people's prayers and I will always respect them."

However, he explained that he has stayed with the Jamaican theatre for 20 years, and it is only in the last three years that he has begun to travel extensively.

In fact, following upon his recent lengthy stint in England, in which he played in both Devon Haughton's "We Run Tings" and Basil Dawkins' "Champagne and Sky Juice," Oliver has now gone off on his North American tour. He will both direct and star in Myrna Laughton's hilarious "Irie Neighbour", along with usual co-stars, Volter "Maffe" Johnson and Ann-Marie "Puncie" Fuller, for the next two months.

However, he expects to return home in December and, he says, he wants to do a local comedy: "I'm just hoping that someone will offer me a script that I can work with," he said.

Oliver was home for a few days last week, following the Toronto leg of the tour, to do another episode of the new series.

Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation (JBC), who are the producers of the "Oliver" series, took the opportunity on Tuesday to host a thank you reception for the sponsors — Kentucky Fried Chicken and WISYNCO's Carib Shandy. Incidentally, each episode of the new series cost \$150,000 to make!

JBC's general manager, Claude Robinson, said that efforts were still being made to recover some of

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Pto

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SAMUELS... "please to emphasize that I have not left my people and I will never leave them out."

B/N SAMUELS, OLIVER

'I've not sold out to the upper classes'

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the losses from the original "Oliver at Large" series. It was widely pirated after being shown on JBC-TV and this was the main reason for the decision to release the video first, this time.

The videos are covered by macrovision, a system which prevents illegal copying of the episodes from the cassettes.

Eddie Lee, managing director of

Dynamic Sounds, which is responsible for the distribution of the videos in the Caribbean and the United States, confirmed that a "fortune" was spent on the macrovision protection.

The first season of the series carries 14 episodes, all of which will be released on video prior to the television release. The second season will carry another 14 episodes. Up to now, neither JBC-

TV nor Oliver is sure when the first season will commence on television.

After reviewing the current four volumes which are available, I found them less funny than the original "Oliver At Large". But Oliver disagreed with the view.

"Maybe I wasn't expressing that rich St. Mary accent as I usually do, but I have to think of the international audiences. I love it. The feeling was great and I enjoyed doing it," he said.

However, we were agreed on, at least, one thing: That of all the writers he used, Patrick Brown seems to best grasp his style of comedy.

The episodes

"Patrick just has a knack of writing for me. He wrote most of the 'Oliver at Large' series. Patrick Brown and Barbara Gloudon know my style very well," he explained.

The episodes so far available on video are:

● **Volume One** — (1) Patrick Brown's "Flight 007", in which Oliver and Margaret Newland resume where they left off the last time, trying to reach New York by air; (2) "Singing Waiter", written by Carey Robinson, attempt to mix comedy with a serious look at a man trying to be manager/waiter/chef of a small restaurant. It al o

stars Pauline Stone-Myrie and Lenford Salmon.

● **Volume 2** — (1) Aston Cooke's "Jam Rock Hotel" stars Oliver and Ann-Marie Fuller as lovers whose lucky week-end for two at a North Coast hotel exposes their naivety; (2) "The Legacy", written by Patrick Brown, is about a private eye (Voller Johnson) who uses Oliver in a scheme to blackmail an elderly man whom he believes has an enormous amount of wealth to unload on a grand-nephew he is looking for.

● **Volume 3** — (1) "One Stop", written by Aston Cooke, about Oliver's attempt to start a grocery store in a troublesome neighbourhood and the women who kill the dream, including Ann-Marie Fuller, Pauline Stone-Myrie, Fleurette Harris and Letna Allen; (2) "Blow Wow", written by Patrick Brown, has Oliver being influenced by Michael Nicholson into taking a part in a dog food commercial which wins him a lot of dog friends.

● **Volume 4** — (1) "Private Eye", another attempt by Maffe (Voller Johnson) to make a fortune as private eye, with the help of Oliver, backfires when the jealous husband beats Oliver into confessing. Written by Patrick Brown; and, (2) "Jive In", another Patrick Brown work, probably the funniest of the series, has Oliver taking a greedy Ann-Marie Fuller to a drive-in cinema with only \$20 in his pocket.



OLIVER SAMUELS as the singing waiter and Ann-Marie Fuller, the reporter in "Singing Waiter" from the comedy series "Oliver."

B/N Samuels, Oliver