

Media specialist EASTON LEE:

“Few Jamaican men can relate to women-as equals”

“NOT MANY Jamaican men I know can relate to a woman as an equal,” says Easton Lee, “they feel threatened, or they feel a lot of other things — but not equality!”

Easton, veteran of many facets of the local media and drama circles — and veteran of a marriage which has been going strong for over 30 years feels two important factors are among the reasons for this situation:

“The woman is to be blamed for some of this,” he says, “Jamaican mothers tend to cater too much to their boy children. They don't give them a sense of independence, they always want to mother them; although, this is changing now.”

On the other hand, he thinks our men are afraid of their femininity “They don't accept the Freudian theory that in each gender there is some of the other.”

“In general, the Jamaican male tries too hard to be male — it is really insecurity — and consequently gets into all sorts of emotional trouble and stress. For instance, some of them feel there are certain things men don't do. It's not manly, for instance, to cry if an emotion moves you — they'll laugh instead. They see certain things in the home as being either male or

Before teaming up with colleagues Corina Meeks to launch their own firm, later to be joined by Hartley Neita, he was Director of Audio-Visuals at the Agency for Public Information (now JIS); Creative Director of LNCK's advertising agency, and Special Assistant (media) to former Prime Minister Michael Manley. He has also served as Producer/Director of API; Drama Development Officer with the Social Development Commission, and Radio Producer/Announcer at JBC.

He has received the Seprod Special Honour for producing and directing the television series “Jamaica Remembers”; the Press Association's 1983 Ranny Williams Prize for Cultural Interest, for producing the radio programme “Caribbean Connections” for BWIA, and the Institute of Jamaica's medal for contributions in the field of drama.

● He has played

He is also a prize-winning photographer, actor, and a poet and playwright. In fact, his play “The Full Price” (1983) was Jamaica's first television play. “The Rope and the Cross,” his other full length play, has won high acclaim here. This grew out of a narrative poem of his, sparked by an interest in the mother-son-relationship — the play examines the suffering of the mother of Jesus and the mother of Judas.

An interesting cross-fertilization between the different creative media followed. Easton's first poem on the theme inspired a ballet choreographed by Sheila Barnett — who coined the title “The Rope and the Cross” — and this sparked a poem by Mervyn Morris and another poem and the play, by Easton. Meanwhile three artists were moved to do works on the theme. Susan Alexander did a triptych, Ralph Campbell a painting, and the young artist Michael Hoshing was so moved by the play that he brought the watercolour he did as a result, as a gift to the playwright. The play is now being published by Creative Projects Limited.

Though Easton longs to be able to concentrate full time on his writing without having “to hustle to make a living”, he has managed to create eight other plays (one acts) and is now working on a third full length play. Not surprisingly, he has a reputation among his colleagues for accomplishing far more than the average person.

His secret, he says is a combination of not wasting time, finding the balance between careful planning and spontaneity, and ensuring that he finds time to “replenish the creative resources.”

Quiet times locked away in his study at home, driving around the countryside on weekends as the spirit moves him (and as the budget allows) and taking in the Trinidadian Carnival each year, are some of the avenues through which he “replenishes”.



EASTON's parents, the late Henry Lee, who came to Jamaica from Canton, China, and Mrs. Eric Lee, nee Simpson, from Junction, St. Elizabeth.

female. Men do not wash dishes or clothes, or cook, or tidy the house.

● To change

“This also is beginning to change, though — and I see the change in married men more than in the bachelors. My sons, for instance, are better at fathering and husbanding than I was. They are really fantastic young men.”

This versatile Aquarian — some astrologers classify him as Pisces since he is born on “the cusp” — says he has few criticisms of the Jamaican woman. However, preferring feminine ladies, he notes that some of our women come across aggressive and unfeminine, when they try too hard to prove they are equal to men.

Easton, a Director for the public relations and communications firm Creative Projects Limited, is an award-winning journalist and dramatist.



And no, the Carnival experience does not have to be as hectic as many Jamaicans imagine. Easton, who first attended it in 1958 because of an academic interest in Caribbean folk manifestations, says that Trinidadians laughed at him for trying to see everything and do everything that first visit.

"People here say that Trinidadians fete around the clock for four days straight," he says, "It's not true! I tried to do that and the Trinidadians laughed at me. Now I know how to pace myself and organize myself to get in a lot of enjoyment.

"It's like life, you have to know yourself and how to pace yourself, and know what you want to do."

● Friends

How does Easton's wife Jean relate to his offbeat ways of recharging? There's no problem, he says, "The thing with Jean and me is, we get on so well because basically, we are friends. The other thing is that we don't crowd each other too much. We allow each other privacy and we allow each other space."

Easton describes his wife as "a fantastic homemaker and a very creative person in the kitchen and around the sewing machine — she made the wedding dresses for our daughters and daughter-in-law, and she makes most of the clothes I wear."

He classifies her as someone whose career is at home, rather than someone who doesn't have a career. With similar roots — his father and her mother both came to Jamaica from China, the couple got married in their teens (he was 19 and she 17), to the dubious prospects of many of their relatives.

Instead of splitting up in a few weeks as predicted, they have raised two sons and two daughters, and as Easton puts it, we have been able "to enjoy each other's success and

(Continued on Page 7)

Easton Lee

(Cont'd from Page 6)
growth." Two important things have helped the Lees to steer safely through the ups and downs, he reflects.

"One is the fact that we are both Christians, and you try to live a certain way, by certain codes — that helps.

The other is, we don't usually take vacations together."

● Separate vacations

The idea of separate vacations came early in the union, when conflicting interests on a Mexican holiday threatened to cause a quarrel. Since then, though they share many interests and often take shorter holidays together, they reserve the annual summer vacation for

each to do exactly what he or she wants.

One happy side effect is that "By the time the two weeks is up" Easton laughs, "you are dying to get home!"

For the future, Easton plans to write two more plays, and wants to write a historical novel on the experiences of his father and his uncle — and other Chinese families — and the different routes they took in becoming part of the Jamaican community. His father, who owned a bakery, lived the rural life (Easton was born in Treiawny and grew up mostly in that parish and in St. Elizabeth) and his uncle, like so many city families with similar backgrounds, lived above the store he ran in Kingston.

Easton Lee

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Easton at JBC mike early in his career.



EASTON and wife Jean (both at centre) with their children: Everard (left) and Barry, and Arlene (left) and Ingrid.

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FLAIR MAGAZINE, TUESDAY FEBRUARY 26, 1985 — PAGE 7

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EASTON as the blind beggar, with Barry Johnson (left) as the narrator in Easton's play 'The Rope and the Cross' performed in the Church at Ally, during a tour of rural areas.