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At the Movies: Hurricane Carter's Life (New York Times)

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At the Movies

Lawrence Van Gelder

■ Telling the story of Hurricane Carter ■ With a new marriage and a new project, it's a busy time for a director ■ The music before sound.

Hurricane Carter's Life

"There has never been a project that I have been involved in on either side of the desk — either as an executive or a producer — that has turned me on like this one has," said David V. Picker.

The producer, who has also presided over the fortunes of Paramount, Lorimar and United Artists, was discussing his plans for bringing to the screen the story of Rubin (Hurricane) Carter, the onetime middleweight-championship contender who spent some 20 years in prison asserting his innocence of a 1966 triple murder before winning his freedom in 1985 and final vindication early last year.

The case was a civil rights cause célèbre, involving convictions reversed on grounds of racial bias and eventual refusal by the United States Supreme Court to reinstate the charges. At its end, Mr. Carter said he was considering several movie offers.

Last fall, through Leon Friedman, one of his lawyers, Mr. Carter met Mr. Picker. "You cannot do this story unless you know the man," Mr. Picker said. "He is a totally mesmerizing, charismatic man of truth."

For his part, Mr. Carter said: "David, I found, has great integrity. He has the experience and the respect in the community. If ever this project is going to be done and done properly, then David Picker will do it."

Mr. Carter, who will be 52 years old on May 6, said the movie would be based on his story as related in two of his books — "The 16th Round," published by Viking in 1974, and a book he is now writing under the tentative title "The Door in the Wall."

"'The Door in the Wall' is the key to success," said Mr. Carter, who now lives in Toronto, where, by coincidence, Mr. Picker is serving as executive producer of "Stella," the Touchstone Pictures-Samuel Goldwyn Company remake of "Stella Dallas," starring Bette Midler.

"This story is universal," Mr. Carter said of his life. "It is a story about how people have something within themselves to overcome adversity no matter how hard they are. There is something within — the inner spirit, the strength in people — that can blossom and bloom, not from the experience, but to overcome the experience."

Mr. Picker said: "What's fascinating to me is that there are aspects of his life which are really not known, involving some Canadian friends of

Rubin and a 15-year-old boy from the ghetto of Brooklyn in 1976 who were instrumental in basically lighting the path and defining the path that led eventually to Rubin's release.

"It takes what is already an extraordinarily dramatic story of prejudice and racism and gives it a unique element that is so totally surprising."

Mr. Picker said that he hoped to film the movie next year and that under a longstanding agreement, Columbia Pictures would have the first look.

"What we're going to do here is to bring to this a film writer and a film maker whose passion will equal ours," Mr. Picker said. "We want someone who will have the chemistry that is already within the group. This has to be a labor of passion, of love."

One Busy Director

These are busy days for Bernard Rose, the British director who was recently introduced to American audiences via "Paperhouse." The film is an eerie stylish tale of a girl who drifts in and out of a very real dream world centering on an isolated house she has drawn with a pencil on a sheet of plain white paper.

A few weeks ago, Mr. Rose married Alexandra Pigg, who starred in "Letter to Brezhnev," and when summer arrives, he is to be filming "Chicago Joe and the Showgirl," starring Emily Lloyd ("Wish You Were Here") and Robert Downey Jr. ("True Believer").

"It's a gangster movie set in London in 1944," said Mr. Rose, who is reluctant to give away the details. "It's a drama, but it's also funny. It's a true story."

Mr. Rose said that in 1984 he had read "Marianne Dreams," the Catherine Storr novel on which "Paperhouse" was based. He bought the rights and took the project to the producers Tim Bevan and Sarah Radclyffe, for whom he had been directing music videos.

"It just felt to me a kind of universal thing," Mr. Rose said. "The image of the house on the hill had some kind of resonance I couldn't explain. It had a kind of universality that seemed inexplicable and bizarre — almost as if it was a kind of dream a lot of people had had, but maybe couldn't quite remember."

The producers, who used money from their music-video company to establish Working Title, the production company that was to bring forth "My Beautiful Laundrette," "Per-

sonal Services," "Wish You Were Here," "Sammy and Rosie" and "A World Apart," chose "Paperhouse" to develop as their first production, although it came to fruition after the others.

Mr. Rose said he made his debut as a film maker at the age of 9 with an old camera in the backyard of his family's house in Highgate, in north London. He had described a nonexistent film in great detail to a friend in school. "Halfway through this enormous lie," he said, "I thought: 'This sounds good. Maybe I'll go out and make a film of it.'"

"I think it was a bizarre piece called 'The Banana Gang,'" he said. "All these kids went around peeling bananas in slow motion and shoving them in each other's faces."

Mr. Rose remembers all his early films as "quite perverse." "There was no adult censoring or authority on them," he said. "I think young boys' imaginations tend toward extreme violence. That's why they all like horror movies."

"I've always thought the rating system was back to front," Mr. Rose said. "There are lots of films adults should be kept out of. They understand them too well."

Before Sound

When sound came to the movies, an entire industry vanished almost overnight — the business of composing, publishing and playing music created to accompany silent films.

For several years, the Library of Congress and the Museum of Modern Art have been engaged in a joint project to preserve the collections of silent-film scores and cue sheets in their custody. Microfilming to preserve the scores has already been completed. And now the second phase of their collaboration has come to fruition with the publication of "Music for Silent Films (1894-1929): A Guide."

Compiled by Gillian Anderson, a music specialist in the Music Division of the Library of Congress, the book consists of a long historical essay about silent-film music and film presentation, followed by a guide to the scores and cue sheets in the Library of Congress and the Museum of Modern Art. The guide also includes an inventory of score and cue sheets in the Arthur Kleiner Collection of the University of Minnesota, the Eastman House Collection in Rochester, the New York Public Library and the collection of the Federation Internationale des Archives du Film in Brussels.

The 182-page volume, illustrated with film stills, sheet-music covers and other photographs, may be obtained from the United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. The title and stock number (030-000-00199-1) must be cited when ordering. The price is \$27, including postage and handling.