

Youssou who?

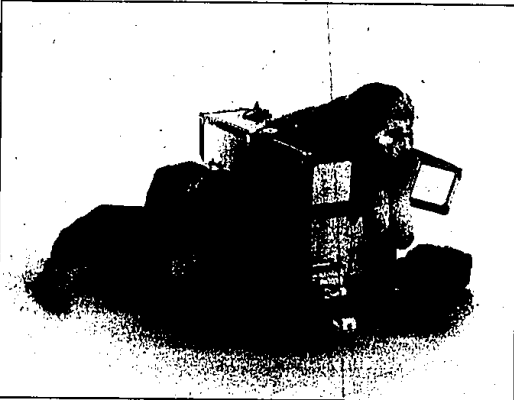
Youssou N'Dour may need an interpreter for interviews, but that's not the case when he opens his mouth to sing. The Senegalese singer who is making a name for himself and his music in this country on Page 3D.

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STREET SCENE

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These 12-week-old Afghan puppies aren't the least bit camera shy.



photos by KIMBERLY L. JAMIESON

Rebecca Chamberlain's 5-year-old golden retriever Cody plays the role of dogdom's "coach potato."



Michael Parton's 8-year-old German Shepherd Tara "Interviews" job applicant Quincey, an 8-year-old soft-coated wheaten, owned by Carol Gustner.

Smile! It's picture perfect pets

By Joanne T. Sobczak
special writer

There she was. The bright lights reflecting against her beautiful hair made it glisten. Those big brown eyes were staring right into mine. What voluptuousness at 108 pounds. Bernadette is a dog — and a spayed one at that. Bernadette is a dog like Ambersand (the Gambler) can fantasize. They certainly do dream.

Bernadette is a mostly brown and white St. Bernard that belongs to Mary Shelly of Bloomfield Hills. She's also a model . . . dog to Shelly and a fashion show piece to Barbara Bocci, who owns Pets in Pictures, an agency in Madison Heights, that supplies dogs (and sometimes cats) for commercials and photo shoots.

Bernadette and Ambersand, another St. Bernard owned by Judi Sage of Pontiac, were both in last November's ski fashion show hosted by the Don Thomas Sportsman in Birmingham.

Bocci wouldn't use a dog she couldn't trust in a crowd of people. She chose the 4-year-old St. Bernard because the canine beauty was friendly and two St. Bernards were requested for the runway affair held in the parking area of Bloomfield Plaza.

Bocci made sure the dogs met each other beforehand as well as were introduced to — or one should say, pet and cuddled by — the other human fashion models in the show.

"WE HAD TO report an hour earlier and in the parking lot. Barb taught Bernadette some commands," Shelly said of the dog's debut. "She loves Barb and wanted to please her."

"We were initially very nervous about our dog being in a strange situation. But she was in seventh heaven. So many people gave her a pat on the head. And she didn't need any special training."

Bocci, a former model herself with a career in television and radio, began taking her pets on the runway as companions and interesting accessories. She was such a big hit, and the idea so successful, that her fashion experience combined with avid participation in dog training led to her creation of the agency as an offshoot of her already established Trainers Academy for Obedience and Behavioral Sciences.

Although Bocci prefers that mom or dad stay home because the dog is less distracted, she will take the owners along. If they insist, but reminds them that the situation calls for extreme professionalism.

"The owner doesn't have to do much at all," Bocci said. "If it takes additional training to use the animal (for a specific show or shoot) then the person would have to train the pet or have one of our trainers teach the dog for that event."

SHE DOES expect some level of obedience training (not necessarily at her school) before registering with the agency. Shelly's dog has fulfilled beginner's level, but has not yet participated in advance instructions which Bocci adamantly requires for commercial filming.

"We don't always select animals that are our graduates," she said. "Anyone can sign up with the agency, although a lot of people in our agency are our students. We don't screen; that's up to the client. Certainly, we don't take aggressive dogs."

So if you have a dog that you believe is the canine equivalent to Marilyn Monroe, Shirley Temple, Fred Astaire or Bono the Clown, what is your first step?

Rebecca Chamberlain, director of the Training Obedience Center classes and coordinator of Pets in Pic-

tures, suggests you register with the agency. The fee is \$15 annually.

And don't forget to bring impressive photos of your pooch. The more the pictures reflect the dog's abilities, the better the chance it has of being selected. Clients may request a certain breed but the performance of a particular task usually determines who is the "lucky dog." So make sure they're action shots.

THE AGENCY lists some 50 to 75 dogs and, in the past year, has accumulated a couple dozen customers including Jacobson's, AT&T, Somerset Mall, Kelly & Company and Dayton-Hudson.

Cats are not registered with the agency because they are not considered trainable. But if there is a need for one, the agency has connections.

Pooch better love its job because megabucks star income is not around the corner. The talent (canine) and master receive \$100 per assignment. The TOC trainer, who is always present and instructing the dog, gets \$50 an hour.

Bocci herself recently assisted as trainer at the production of a Michigan Lottery commercial filmed in Port Huron.

"They told us they wanted a dog that would just jump up and have a good time with a child and maybe retrieve a stick out of the water," said Bocci, an obedience instructor for more than a decade. "So, we basically had to provide advance dogs; you can't use an animal that's not trained and hope it will inadvertently go and fetch a stick."

"When you are working on a commercial, the dog has to do the trick over and over again. If that dog isn't trained, after three times the average dog doesn't feel like playing anymore. Then what do you do? The answer is nothing."

THE MICHIGAN Lottery shoot involved 20 takes, so the dog retrieved 20 times. So that's why when there is a 25-30 person crew, cameras and technical equipment, it's Bocci and Chamberlain's job to provide a dog that will perform accordingly.

According to Bocci, making commercials is the most lengthy, pressurized activity for a dog. Unlike print or runway work, the dog is constantly moving and is expected to come in on cue. There is stress on the animal although Bocci does make it fun — of course, with edibles.

"An animal is right now; you can't explain to it that lunch break is in a half hour," she said. "The time frame is the present. You have to think, 'Get going now while the animal is fresh.'"

Print work generally requires the dog to sit or stand, so a pet with just a beginner's background can be used even though the hours are long — and any fashion model can testify to that.

Runway is another challenge.

"You just can't take a dog on a runway that has never seen height, people or lights," said Bocci.

MICHELE PARTON'S 9-year-old German Shepherd, Tara, has been enjoying stardom for about a year. Her interest in putting her pets in pictures (she also owns a Shetland sheep dog named Chevy) is for fun and to earn extra cash.

"I thought it would be nice to make a little money to pay for their show entries," said the Oak Park resident. "I like doing as much as I can with my dogs — they're my buddies."

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At age 11, Rebecca Chamberlain's golden retriever Muffie is literally "digging" its career as a model.