Treat from page E1

low-life loan-sharks, mobsters, bounty hunters and hustlers lit-tering the American landscape has attracted a wider audience.

Definitely hip

The critical body of Leonard's 34 novels include 'Out of Sight,' "Riding the Rap," "Get Shorty," "City Primoval," "Stick, "LaBrava," "Swag," "The Hunted" and "52 Pick-Up."

"52 Pick-Up."
Since Leonard wrote his first novel, "The Bounty Hunters" in 1953, 28 of his books have been either optioned to movie studios or made into movies.

or made into movies.

For years, however, the film versions of Leonard's novels got panned ("Stick" with Burt Reynolds). But that's changing as his deadpan characters are being treated with a threedimensional edge. Two of his recent novels, "Get Shorty" and "Rum Punch" have received criti-

cal and popular acclaim.
"The breakout 1995 hit, "Get Shorty," starred John Travolton, Danny DeVito, Renee Russo and Gene Hackman. With the success

ness of Chili Palmer (Travolta), a vacant soul who is delightfully

entertaining. In "Jackie Brown," currently in

In "Jackie Brown," currently in theaters, Tarantino modified the plot, changed the lead character and augmented the dialogue FRum Punch."

"The dialogue starts out as mine, but Quentin elaborates on it. When you put (the story) in his hands, thore's going to be more of him than me in it. I think with us, there's a natural partnership.

think with us, there's a natural partnership."
After four decades as a novelist and screenwriter, all the recent attention from readers, publishers, Hollywood producers and literary critics just isn't to honor Leonard's longevity or pro-

hanor Leanard's longwity or pro-life output.
Leanard has seemingly crossed over from a crime genre writer into the mainstream melting pot of American popular culture.
"He's the person to whome every other crime writer is com-pared," said Jackie Farber, Leonard's longtime editor at Delacorte Press. He mines the sights and sounds of a scene and is extremely careful about point

of view."

In the mid 1980s, according to Farber, with the publishing of "LaBrava" and "Glitz." Leonard began attracting favorable critical reviews in The New Yorker, The New York Review of Books, among other prestigious publications.

among other prestigious publica-tions.

Admirers are as diverse as high schoolers, cutting-edge film-makers and conservative ideo-logue George Will, who sent Leonard 40 copies of "Out of Sight" to inscribe for his friends. High-brow critics now know what chie crime readers have long realized: Dutch is definitely hip.

long realized: Duten is definitely hip.

On Friday, the state of Michigan proclaimed 'Elmore Leonard Day.' Leonard was on hand a Borders in downtown Birmingham to commemorate the honor by kicking off a nine-city booksigning tour that'll take him from New York to LA, where hell read from his new book in the trendy Viper Room.

In the LA club owned by actor Johnny Depo. Leonard is sched-dohnny Depo. Leonard is sched-

Johnny Depp, Leonard is uled to also introduce the Coyotes, an underground band that has found a way into the much-awaited sequel to "Get Shorty."
"I'm on page 170-something."

much-awaited sequel to "Get Shorty."

"I'm on page 170-something," said Leonard, sitting at a desk in his spacious living room. From his vantage point, Leonard looks through the French doors and onto a sprawling yard that includes a tennis court and swimming pool.

The sequel was undertaken because of his interest in resurrecting Chili Palmer and the prodding of MGM top executive Frank Mancuso and Travolta.
"Chili Palmer is in the music business," said Leonard. In "Get Shorty," the mobstor Palmer caududes that the film business is not too different from his regular line of work.

not too different from ms regum-line of work.

"I ran the idea past my researcher and Travolta, and they loved it, the said.
But before Travolta reprises the role, it's likely that Universal will produce "Cuba Libre." The screen adaptation is in the

hands of "Fargo" directors, Joel and Ethan Coen.

and Ethan Coen.
Mainstream Hollywood has
finally caught on to the wry
appeal of Leonard's stories. In
the words of British novelist
Martin Amis – a wicked wit not
known to dish praise – Leonard

known to dish praise – Leonard is as American as jazz.

In a glowing review of "Riding the Rap" in The New York Times Book Review. Amis observed: (Leonard understands the postmodern world of wissed-up rabble and zero authenticity.

Leonard's American is seen through the eyes of an array of ampty souls whose common interest is greed and a fast-track to the American dream of estentious wealth. A place where and the product with the bad gays as the good guys, said Leonard, who relies on a researcher. There's a morally in the books, a gray area where there's room to rationalize. There

aren't any moral absolutes."
Delacorte, Dell and Avon
Booka will rerelease Leonard's
novels and short stories in hard
and soft cover as an increasing
number of readers discover his
body of work.

'I like to set up a character
and see what happens to him. I
write to discover, said Leonard.
'When I get into a scene I think,
'What's the purpose of the scene
and 'Whose point of view is it
being told.' Then, I listen for the
character's sound.'

As 72, some authors might
look closer to home for perspective. Perhaps compose a narrative that takes a metaphysical
look at life.

"If I got philosophical about
life, I'd laugh at myself," said
Leonard. 'I know what I can and
can't de. I learned that early on.

"That's really what it's all
about.'

Never underestimate a dead-

about.

Never underestimate a dead-an with perfect delivery.

Comet from page E1

"It has been one of the most gratifying experiences I've had and that includes 'Roots.' That was wonderfol, but this is more personal, dealing with experiences I've shared."
"Halley's Comet' is dedicated to the memory of the late Alex Haley, author of the best-selling book 'Roots' on which the phenomenally successful TV miniseries was based. Amos said no one connected with the project, nected with the project, ing producer David

one connected with the project, including producer David Wolper, ever imagined the impact it would have.

"A year after it was shown, the late Madge Sinclair, who played my wife (we dance over the broom in the slave wedding), and I were in Spain for the 'Rota' debut there. They took us to a restaurant in Toledo and across from us were some visitors from from us were some visitors from Japan," he said. "After we had finished our meal of several tinished our meal of several courses, they gave us a standing ovation. Madge and I looked at each other and we wept. That got the message home to us about the impact that series had."

Amos called Haley a quiet, most their way and the nonether and the series had."

Amos called haley a query unobtrusive man who none-the-less had an aura obout him of "a man at peace with himself." Though "Halley's Comet" is Amos' first play, he actually began his career as a writer. He was a copy writer for an adver-

tising firm when he began con-tributing skits to the Los Ange-les comedy show "Loman and Barkley."

Barkley,
Comedy writing led to comedy acting.
He had a role in one of television's acclaimed classics as Gordy the weatherman on 'The Mary Tyler Moore Show.' He said that show was an example of a strong ensemble of dedicated actors and writers who never pandered to the lowest common denominator.

But he is better known, perhaps, for his work as the father in Norman Lear's 'Good Times.'
"Good Times' was a bittersweet experience for me. I got to play a patriarchal head of a family – there had never been a black family with both parents.

It provided me with a great capportunity, but also a great challenge. Having been raised in a black family and as the father of one. I figured I knew more about it than our writers. It was a bone of contention when they killed off my character.'

Amos said a lot of people think he quit the show. But, he said, he was actually dropped because of his vocal objections to the direction the show was taking, capecially its emphasis on Jimmy Walker's flamboyant JJ rather

tion the show was taking, espe-cially its emphasis on Jimmy Walker's flamboyant JJ rather than the other, more responsible

Halley's Comet What: One-man drama written by and starring John Amos.

re: Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 350 Medison Ave.

When; 8 p.m. Wednesday Saturday, When; 4 p.m. Wednesday-saturday, Jan. 28-31; 3 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, Special one-hour school performance 10:30 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 29. Tickets: \$26.50, \$31.50 and

\$36.50 on sale at the Music Hall box office, all Ticketmaster locations and by phone (248) 645-6666. For more information, call the Music Hall at (313) 963-2366.

children. He said today, s comedies with a few exceptions don't measure up.

Amos recently gave up a position as administrator of New Jersey's Harm's Center to pursue his busy stage, movie and television projects. He is preparing to star in a movie, "Four," and is hoping to make a movie of "Halley's Comet" and develop it into a television series. In the meantime, he is developing a graphic movel and a CD Rom for high school students based on the play;

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Comedy writing led to comedy

play:

"It's a tough nut to crack, but
so was the pluy," Amos said.
"With God's blessing, it will hop-

Students from page E1

through April.
"Our Town' is very American, it's a very simple story that unfolds very gently," said Sherian. It's about family, love and life, and recognizing the value of life, it reminds us of our humanity, We're so busy living life that we don't appreciate how rich it is."

"In "Our Town" the audience learns what was happening in Grover's Corners beginning May, 7, 1901, from a narrator por-trayed by Jennifor L. Smith of Auburn Hills. The play also fea-tures performances by Kimshel-ley Garner (Rochester Hills), Amanda Lange (Farmington Hills), Matt Omans (Oxford), Samuel Newman (West Bloom-field), Karey L. Hart (Walled

Lake), Scott Vance and Michael W. Ott of Rochester Hills.

Wayne State University

Randy Topper of Farmington Hills is Jewish and dyed his hair blond to look more German for "The Jewish Wife," one of two one-aet plays by Brecht that he is appearing in at WSU's Studio Theatre.

In this play, Kelly Komlen of

In this play, Kelly Komlen of Livonia portrays his wife who is Jewish and getting ready to leave him and their comfortable German life. Her husband is a scientist who could be asked to work for the "master race."
"Yen over read or done anything like Brecht, "said Komlen. "You have to approach it from different angles. Brecht believed

that the actor's role is to be a stothat the actor's role is to be a storyteller. The majority of the training I've had was to get to know your character and become your character. But Brecht believed the actor having a lot of emotions would cause the audience to lose their focus of what the play is about."

Topper said he is emotionally drained after rehearsals, 'It's a very personal subject matter,' he said. 'I lost family in the Holocaust. To detach myself from this character is very hard. You totally have to not think about it.'

Brecht was a German Marxist

iy have to not think about it."

Brecht was a German Marxist with strong anti-fascist beliefs who left Nazi Germany in 1933. WSU is presenting these works to honor Brecht on the 100th anniversary of his birth.

