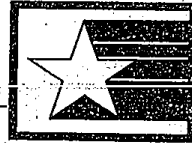


# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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(O)SC

## 'Split Second' keeps cropping up

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

**A**CTOR JOHN AMOS, who is starring in "Split Second" at the Birmingham Theatre, had his first contact with the police drama a few years back when John Danelle, who plays his son in the show, sent a copy of the script to his agent.

Unfortunately, said Amos in a backstage interview, "The script sat on my agent's desk for about eight

months before I saw it. By that time the play had opened in New York.

Losing the chance to star in the off-Broadway production was not the only thing Amos missed out on regarding the play. He also lost the opportunity for the screen rights, which he would have liked. "The screen rights were acquired by Motown," he said. "Berry Gordy of Motown will produce the film."

"That precipitated firing my agent," he declared, recalling the incident.

See review of "Split Second" on 8C.

**AMOS NEXT TRIED** producing and directing "Split Second" with the Bahamian Repertory Company, where he has directed "Twelve Angry Men" and "And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little."

"It was aborted three or four days before it opened," he explained. He had to leave the Bahamas in order to work on a TV job, on "Hunter." He has a daughter in college and a son who will be starting college soon, and it was important to him to take the job that would put dollars in the bank for their education.

Amos got another chance to appear in "Split Second" when he was asked to perform with the Los Angeles company in Santa Monica. For his performance last year as the retired veteran police officer, Rusty Johnson, Amos "was honored in receiving the NAACP Black Image award."

Danelle originated the role of Johnson's son, Val, in the off-Broadway production of "Split Second." Earlier, Amos and Danelle played father and son in a Broadway production of a comedy "Tough to Get Help."

At the Birmingham Theatre, for the first time, they are together performing as father and son in "Split Second."

**AMOS DESCRIBED** the two characters' roles as a difference in two kinds of morality. "I represent the older morality. If you've done it, own up to it! My son represents today's morality. 'Hey, if nobody's watching, do it!'"

In "Split Second," Danelle as a young police officer finds himself in a situation where he makes a decision in a split second and has to live with the consequences.

"It's very interesting," Amos said, talking about the plot, while trying not to give it away. "In the course of arresting a felon, who is stealing a car, the situation escalates into a racial barangue."

That's what the play's opening moments are about. Other action on stage takes place in the police station and homes of the police officer and his son. The drama concerns a question of morality, after the officer shoots the suspect.

"I've never seen a play where the audience becomes so emotionally involved. They talk back to the actors and themselves. It's a very visceral play," Amos said, referring to the reaction he experienced with the Los Angeles production.

**HE RECALLED** that police officers — black, white, Latino and others — were equally moved by the powerful drama. "They came backstage with tears in their eyes. They told me it was the most sensitive portrayal of their lives."



photos by GARY CASKEY/staff photographer

**John Amos stars as Rusty Johnson, a retired police officer, and John Danelle is his son, Val, a young policeman, in "Split Second" at**

**the Birmingham Theatre. Amos last starred at the theatre three seasons ago in "Master Harold . . . and the Boys."**



**Cherron Hoye plays Val's wife, Alca, in the taut police drama by Dennis McIntyre. Rehearsal photos were taken the afternoon before the show's first preview performance Friday.**



**Jerome Preston Bates is Charlie, Val's buddy. Stage is divided into different areas, to represent various settings, such as this bar scene.**



**Amos talks about the show, during a backstage interview last week.**



**world-class violinist and composer-arranger.** "We've written an entire show, dedicated to Ronald B. McNair, the deceased black astronaut."

Amos and Pointer will be performing at services for McNair in Georgia. The night before the dedication ceremonies, they will do their show, which includes a 12-minute vignette on highlights of McNair's life prior to the tragedy. In the vignette, Amos portrays McNair's father, Carl, and Pointer is McNair. Pointer's responses are all sung.

"The show is coming to Detroit this summer," Amos said. "I'm talking to people at several venues. There also will be a concert in the Bahamas and Los Angeles."

The two-hour show features an hour of music by Pointer and his band, plus the vignettes which also include "Halley's Comet and the Old Man," with Amos portraying a man who has seen the comet come by, for the second time, and "The B Boy," about a contemporary urban figure, "a kid in the inner city who has a ghetto blaster on his shoulder."

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