

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor 644-1100



(C/O)

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One of 'Them' First role is quite a switch

By Dan Greenberg
special writer

IT'S ALWAYS A pleasure to interview young people who have embarked on a voyage of self-discovery with clearly defined travel plans and their bags packed with intelligence and energy.

Eric Kingston of West Bloomfield, who recently completed filming "Them," is one such individual.

Unlike so many would-be performers who started out as three-year-old mice with pink ears in their nursery school plays, Kingston only recently decided that acting, writing and, someday, directing, is the way he wants to spend his life.

"Acting is a constant challenge physically and mentally. You can never learn enough about it" is typical of Kingston's attitude. "Knowledge is everything and I've always done a lot of self-education, reading on my own," he said.

BORN IN Detroit and graduated from West Bloomfield High School, Kingston took a business degree at Michigan State University in January 1989. For many years he watched old movies to learn writing techniques. But he also was good at improvising skits for family and friends. A friend of his sister suggested he audition for "Them," a recently completed Delta Productions film directed by Doug Schultz and starring John Saxon.

He was surprised but pleased to be cast as the evil Bobby Jones, the chief mutant and obedient servant of the evil Professor (John Saxon). Filmed at the Clin-



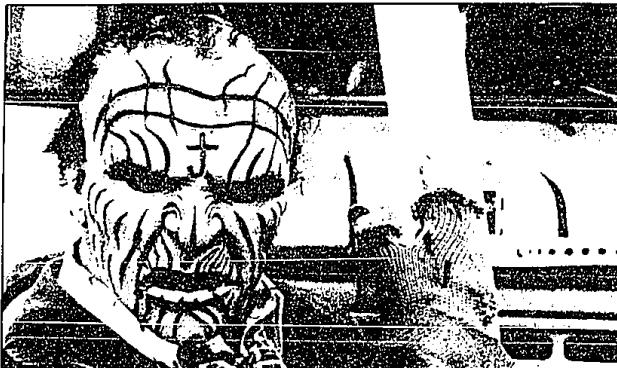
Eric Kingston of West Bloomfield is shown in the second stage of his transformation into Bobby Jones, chief mutant, in the movie "Them."

ton Valley Center in Pontiac, with the assistance of Gov. James Blanchard and the State of Michigan, "Them" is a psycho thriller where mutants are created by drug injection.

Those injections cause strange

physical changes. Kingston said, "I had no idea what was involved in full prosthetic makeup. They had to take a full mold of my face which was probably the worst experience of my life."

During such work, the actor



Kingston, in the final stage, looks like this in Saxon as the evil Professor who creates mutants by drug injection.

breathes through a small hole in the mask leading to his nose. "It feels like you're being buried alive," Kingston said.

"That mask is eight pieces and it's custom-made. It took three, sometimes four hours, to get into makeup every day, depending if the pieces were pre-painted or not."

KINGSTON LOST about 10 pounds during filming of "Them." One day he was in makeup for 15 hours, and because of the lighting, they weren't able to shoot at all.

"Acting is a lot of hard work. People think it looks like fun but they don't realize when you get a script it's just words and you've got to make it live," he said.

That and spending 15 hours in prosthetic devices was a tough but exciting first role for Kingston. He is awaiting word on his audition for the local production, "Kill All the Lawyers," but is determined to pursue his acting career.

Prior to "Them," his acting was confined to studies at Michigan State University, Cranbrook

and the Attie Theatre. The lead in "Hamlet" and Marc Anthony in "Julius Caesar" were his two major roles.

Kingston refers to Uta Hagen's "Respect for Acting" with considerable regard and discusses the importance of self-knowledge. "How can you put something original into the character if you don't know who you are?"

WHEN HE WAS cast as the evil Bobby Jones, he decided to make the character unique. He watched the original Frankenstein and decided the key was to make it clear to all viewers that "No way are you going to get away from Bobby Jones."

Although pleased to have the role — "I've made a unique monster, something totally new in a long legacy of screen monster" — he recognizes the problems of violence in our society and that the media contributes to those problems.

"We show so much violence and aggression on the screen and TV and in the papers that the

world is desensitized. Some of the stuff they show on the news, people should be horrified from, and now they just put the news on and sit down to dinner. What's the news? Killings, rapes, drugs . . . People can't remain sensitive when you expose them to that so many thousands of times.

"So there's your two points of view. One, it was a challenge to create a unique character but, two, violence does desensitize people.

"You know, when you're making the movie, you don't see the violence because everything is fake. Blood is just dyed syrup, the skin is rubber and the bullets are blanks. But on the screen in the theater when it's dark, it's real. Hopefully no one will take it too far.

"Violence and sex are in movies because they sell but they distort what's really important — drama, comedy, human experience."

Eric Kingston, a young man with talent, energy, intelligence and his eye on an acting career.

upcoming things to do

● **NEW SEASON**
The Birmingham Theatre's 1990-91 season will offer six productions, Sept. 11 through June 16. Featured will be four musicals and the Detroit premiere of two comedies. Musicals are "Singin' in the Rain," Sept. 11 through Oct. 14; "Bells Are Ringing," co-produced with the Goodspeed Theatre, Dec. 29 through Jan. 27; a return engagement of "Nunsense," Feb. 5 through March 10; and Rodgers and Hammerstein's "South Pacific," May 14 through June 18. Comedies include "Beau Jest," Nov. 13 through Dec. 16, and "Shirley Valentine," April 2 through May 5. Season's subscriptions offer six shows

for the price of five. For more information call 644-9225 Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

● **NEW MUSICAL**
Birmingham Village Players will present a new musical, "Kip Synatra's Mobile Musical," for a special run to benefit the Players Building Fund. The musical by Michael C. Vigilante and Gerald V. Castle is a satirical look at contemporary lives and times. Curtain time is 8:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday, June 22-23, 29-30. Adult tickets are \$8 and student tickets \$6. For reservations call 644-2075 anytime. Tickets also may be purchased at the door.

● **ART SEMINAR**
Artists, filmmakers and the attorneys who represent them will speak at the annual Art in the Law Seminar from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, June 9, at the Birmingham-Bloomfield Art Association in Birmingham. Featured speakers include Nathan White, producer-director of the feature film "Carrier," and Sue Marx, producer of the Academy-Award-winning film "Young at Heart." The \$20 registration fee includes lunch. For more information or reservations call Richard Herman at 647-4222.

● **AUDITIONS OPEN**
The Jewish Community Center,

with Nancy Gurwin Productions, will hold auditions for "A Chorus Line" at 7 p.m. Monday-Tuesday, June 11-12, at the JCC in West Bloomfield. Singers and dancers are needed. The musical opens Saturday, Sept. 8. For more information call Nancy Gurwin at 354-0545 or 352-2797.

● **FINAL PLAY**
Jewish Ensemble Theatre completes its inaugural season with a production of "Slow Dance on the Killing Ground," William Handley's exploration of human guilt, rebellion and desperate search for love. Performances are at the Aaron DeRoy Theatre in the Jewish Community

Center in West Bloomfield. Five preview performances began Wednesday, June 6. Opening night is Wednesday, June 13, with 15 performances scheduled through Sunday, July 1. Tickets are available through the JET by calling 788-2900 or through Ticketmaster at 645-6666. Tickets range from \$8 to \$17.50. Senior, student and group discounts are available.

● **OUTDOOR CONCERTS**
"Jazz to the Hill," a Wednesday night jazz concert series, which unveiled last year, returns to the Troy Hilton with a top-name lineup that opens June 13 with Spyro Gyra. More than music lovers were at-

tracted to the hotel last year for the Jazz Wednesday and pop music at the Hot Summer Nights series Friday. A \$30,000 permanent stage has been installed. Spyro Gyra, a six-member band headed by saxophonist Jay Beckenstein, is known for its blend of jazz, rock and a fusion between the two. Concerts continue through Aug. 29, except for July 4.

Other artists scheduled include the Chick Corea Electric Band, Tim Weisberg and Stanley Jordan. In addition, Angela Bofill, Richard Elliot, Tom Grant, Norma Jean Bell and the All Stars, Kirk Whalum with Alexander Zornig, and Don Grusin with Gary Herbig will take the stage.

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