

# James Earl Jones stars in 'Gabriel's Fire'

## Actor in another quality role

By ANNE WHEELER

James Earl Jones almost always seems to be involved with quality projects, and his role as ex-con Gabriel Bird in ABC's "Gabriel's Fire" is no exception.

The role was created especially for Jones, who likes the character's ingenuous perspective toward re-entering society after 20 years, "not having an attitude, or as they say, 'attitude' about things, leaves him kind of pure. He's got to look at things for what they are, and that's something he's learned in jail," Jones said.

Bird was sent to prison for intentionally shooting, and subsequently killing, his police partner during a raid to save the life of a woman and her child. Now, two decades after Bird's trial, a defense attorney finds he was not defended properly and springs him from prison on a techni-

cality.

Lalla Robins plays Victoria Heller, the defense attorney who discovers the irregularities of Bird's case while examining the case of a client who has just been killed in prison.

Bird, however, is torn between his new freedom and his feelings of guilt for not having served enough time for his crime.

"I think what's interesting about Gabriel Bird is that, yes, he's guilty, he pulled a trigger, he did it. And as is said in the pilot, 'You could have shot him in the arm and the leg, but you didn't.' And that's what he's had to live with," said Jacqueline Zambrano, producer/writer of the ABC series.

"He was a man who was a policeman. He believed in law and order," Jones explained of his character. "And now that side of him is very real. A person who can't get rid of the guilt, I think, is very realistic, and that is who he is."

Although he is physically released

from prison, Bird finds himself imprisoned in other ways, such as having to cope with changes that have taken place while he was incarcerated. He experiences small changes in everyday life, as well as more monumental alterations, like seeing his daughter for the first time in 20 years, or searching for the graves of his parents, who died while he was in prison.

Despite the fact that many of his projects have serious themes, including "Gabriel's Fire," Jones has a delightfully touching humorous side. In fact, he was being considered for a situation comedy at the same time ABC was considering him for the role of Gabriel Bird.

The 59-year-old actor, whose Broadway work has garnered him Tony Awards for "The Great White Hope" and "Fences," said he is turning to television and feature films because the routine is less strenuous with a regular filming schedule versus rehearsing and performing eight shows a week throughout the run of a play.

"You get up at 6 every morning, and they come get you," Jones said about working for a television network. "And they put stuff on your face, and they push you out in front of the camera."

**FRIDAY**

Julia Duffy plays a suburban housewife who teams up with a police detective (Ed Marinaro) to solve a *Murder at the PTA Luncheon*, Friday on CBS.

FUN MONEY  
WORTH \$2.00  
TOWARD ANY PURCHASE OF \$10.00 OR MORE  
(Excluding Pet Food)

**Specialty**  
PET SUPPLIES

38507 W. 10 Mile Road  
Farmington Hills  
471-7387  
Mon.-Fri. 10-8  
Sat. 10-6 • Sun. 12-4 P.M.  
Expires 10-31-90