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Sidney Poitier Still Believes in Love

By JAMES MEADE
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HOLLYWOOD — As a producer, Sidney Poitier has made three films, "For Love of Ivy," "Buck and the Preacher" and "Warm December," directing the last two. Two of the three have been love stories. Why?

"I have a strong feeling for people in a loving way," Poitier said during a "Warm December" postscreening interview. "I want people to exercise more care, more tenderness toward each other. If this attitude marks the highly naive, I expect I'm one of them. "When I came out of movies as a child, I liked the kind that made me feel nice" so I could relish the exhilaration of the moment. If I saw 200 Indians killed by 27 insensitive settlers: or four-letter words were thrown around, or the human relationships were degrading, I didn't feel too good.

"Cynicism has been the theme of many recent pictures. It has not been helpful. I do not accept aggression or violence when the point is only an expression of violence. That may not be learned or sophisticated.

"I prefer films that explore some aspect of the human condition and which will make me a more effective person. I can't deal with unmotivated violence in the movies. I get enough of that on the six o'clock news.

"There are a good number of



SIDNEY POITIER

people who stay home and watch television. I hope some of them will come out to see this picture. It is a love story with black people.

"I've seen hundreds of love stories all with white actors my age (49) and many actresses no longer in the game. This is a simple, ordinary love story with blacks and no polemics to sell.

"It doesn't bother to tell us things we already know—the situation in Washington, D.C., for instance. The people are black middle class, an area not explored in films.

"The majority of black people are not street people, not pimps nor hustlers. They range from post office clerks to professional people who got there, not by selling dope, but by training themselves and developing skills. I wanted to give them some film publicity. Street people are not the whole black community.

"I know it is momentarily exciting to make films about street people but I want to show black life more dimensionally. The black middle class also is concerned about racism. In fact, it has provided much of the leadership in combating it.

Poitier said he found directing difficult both times because acting and directing are two distinct and unrelated talents.

Poitier said he hopes someday to concentrate on producing and directing, acting only "if someone I respect wants a beat-up, old actor to help him make his comment."

Poitier was born in Florida. He spent an impoverished youth in the Bahamas before becoming the first major American Negro film star after a long preparation and struggle. Poitier said he learned from his farmer father, "not to live parasitically—if you eat, you must work"—and from his mother, the uselessness of self-pity.

"I had a tough life in the early days. I found there are no rewards nor joy like working hard. Hard work is therapeutic. Hard work and discipline are necessary.

Poitier declined to join in the

scrapbook game of naming his favorite film. "When I was younger I might have said yes on some good big pictures I have been in.

"Early values are like leaves in the wind. Now I'd like to be remembered by a particular

film or an aspect of my career. That I was a black actor who played certain parts will not be important 50 years from now.

"I would prefer to think my life contributed to a little better world..."

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