

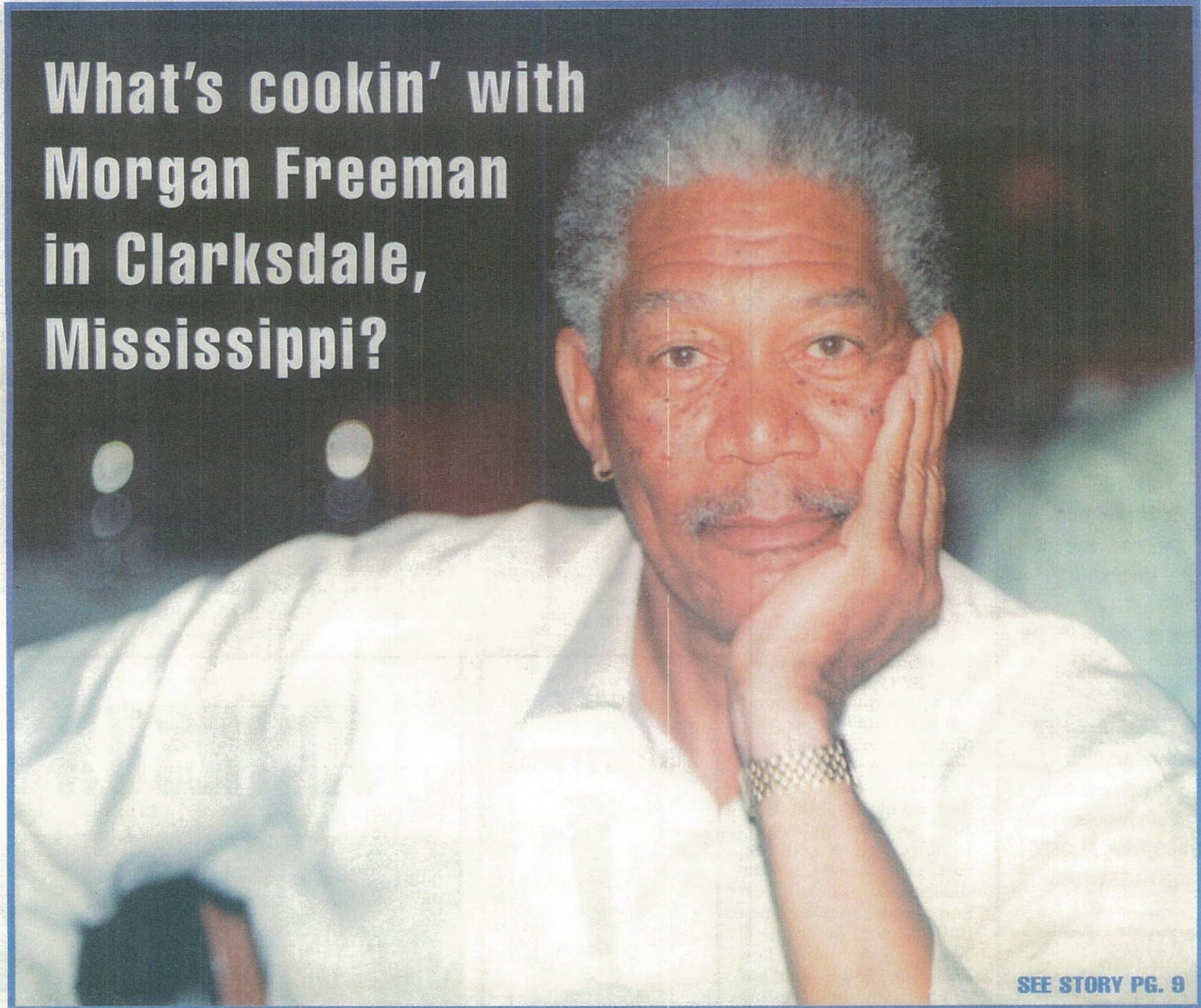
SHOWTIME



JULY 10, 2003

THE BIRMINGHAM TIMES ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

What's cookin' with Morgan Freeman in Clarksdale, Mississippi?



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You won't believe what's cookin' with Morgan Freeman in Clarksdale, Mississippi!

by Saahara Glauvé
Glauvé Productions
SG Media, LLC

INTRODUCTION

Glauvé Productions, SG Media, LLC www.glaudeproductions.com, produced a recent press junket to meet with Morgan Freeman and Associates in Clarksdale, Mississippi through THE BIRMINGHAM TIMES for national publication, featuring THE BIRMINGHAM TIMES Food Editor, Mariea Wooding and Photojournalist, Stephonia McLinn.

PROFILE OF MORGAN FREEMAN

Morgan Freeman is an exclusive member of the Hollywood millennium top of the heap 'Grand' A List. Part of Freeman's legacy is when the request is issued for an actor surpassing all others, the summons will be for a "Morgan Freeman type."

Freeman has emerged as an aristocrat of the silver screen. Today's cinematic focus demands glory, with the subsequent projected image that one's arrival is based on ability. Morgan Freeman has the tenacity to earn glory without being beholding to hype. His apparent passion being quality of performance. Any familiarity with film history bears witness to the reality that few same race dramatic actor role models preceded Freeman on the big screen. There was Paul Robeson, Bill "Bojangles" Robinson, Ossie Davis, Brock Peters, Sammy Davis, Jr., Sidney Poitier and Harry Belafonté. Incredibly talented gentlemen who barely pierced the industry — in direct proportion to their non-Black counterparts — and who for the most, remained and continue to remain relegated below their capabilities.

Will Smith, Laurence Fishburne, Wesley Snipes, LL Cool Jay - even Denzel Washington and Samuel Jackson owe a hefty debt of gratitude to the coattail of Morgan Freeman. He has mightily influenced 'great' acting as an attainable blind race card craft ('though not so easily). Morgan is like that uniquely phenomenal singer. You know the one - their Aria's delivered at peak, just like their Lead Belly renditions - then coming right back with a bit of Tyrese with doses of



Main photo: Actor Morgan Freeman's restaurant Madidi, located in Clarksdale, MS. Inset photos: Interior views of Madidi. All photos by Stephonia McLinn.

Nat Cole - and if called for, Marvin, Sinatra, Luther, Donnie McClurkin - even 'Fifty.' That once in a lifetime performer, like Aretha, who can do it all. Freeman has achieved acting blue-blood status minus that "devouring ego" that places skill behind 'exposure at all cost.' Freeman is not a sell out. He's the undisputed Marty Scorsese of acting.

Each work, in its perfection, a well ordered affair. From "Driving Miss Daisy" to a current mainstream image of God in "Bruce Almighty", with a Robert Redford and Jennifer Lopez work in the making, and countless breathtaking, daring, imaginative - even US Presidential roles later, Freeman remains unmatched in his scope of ability to deliver. His most memorable 'driving' has been the role of the Black male actor straight into the arena of choice. Role selection by discretion - not, desperation.

Freeman is not a blaxploitation product. He wielded his acting prowess and skirted around to substantive roles, right out the cinematic starting gate like a thoroughbred stallion running for the win. Freeman is sometimes referred to as "Hollywood's Senior

Statesman." Given his body of work, that merely brushes against his stature. Morgan Freeman is an actor's actor, able to enchant a Broadway audience in an array of characters from

*It's best not to eat
for several days
before
visiting Madidi so
you can eat as
much as your
stomach can hold.*

the roughest street hood to King Lear. Many fans don't realize that Freeman is a "child of the theatre." What sets him far above the ionosphere where few actors dwell, is that within his skill to convince, resides the ease of a sweet Southern Summer breeze.

There are few heirs to Freeman's acting throne. The Hollywood success community is so small that each year tomor-

row's hopefuls are earmarked and feed to the publicity mill to maintain tabloid circulation and the likes thereof. The division between actors and movie stars 'is' a great divide. Being a great actor and a star, like Freeman - a rarely attainable posture - is an even smaller arena. When you talk 'race', the rungs to the pinnacle are confined to more limitations. Morgan Freeman's film presence is consistently given to steer a movie to around the world success. And, he can lend mountainous credibility to a mildly known aspiring star, practically guaranteeing him or her future film success. Few reach this level of defining superior acting.

Morgan Freeman's favorite role? The cowboy! And, that's straight from the horses' mouth!

Morgan Freeman's work exudes one centralized common thread of intent: honor the promise of excellence, never shattering expectations. As modern day onlookers, we are too informed not to know that not winning an Oscar, in no way interprets as 'not' deserving one. Fortunately, moviegoers are astute; and, to our great fortune, every time Freeman's name appears on the marquee,

we 'know' we're in for an Oscar caliber performance. His name is synonymous with Laurence Olivier, Sidney Poitier, Jeremy Irons and Richard Harris; all bearing a mantle of distinction rarely achieved.

In this age where gene therapy has moved from the lab to the clinic, as scientist pursue designer genes, should the biotechnological industry put human genes to specific use, cultivation of Freeman's acting skills would be blueprinted for harvest to generate the level of excellence he represents. Freeman is grounded with performance ethics that today are replicated in an edit bay. Many, many actors are superstars. Few like Morgan, create a mold that becomes an industry Holy Grail.

THE FREEMAN ENCOUNTER

Freeman who is naturally charismatic and whose caring attitude is at the core of his nature, personally greeted Mariea Wooding, Stephonia McLinn and myself at MADIDI Restaurant in Clarksdale, Mississippi, totally absent of standing on ceremony - no publicist in tow - fully commanding his own ship. Not to be fooled,

mind you, by his laid back approachable demure. If you have any sense at all, you know if you step to his plate you'd better have all your ducks-in-a-row. His acme industry sixth sense instinctively knows whether or not you can rise to the occasion. Otherwise, 'you' instinctively know he's capable of making dog meat out of you. But of course, in the utmost gentlemanly fashion. He shoots from the gut! It is no surprise that Freeman and his wife Myrna returned to his birthplace of Mississippi and generated an upscale Mediterranean Restaurant and a bluesy Blues Club - both of which are transforming Clarksdale into an international stopover bonanza!



Freeman with his wife, Myrna Freeman

Achievements and ability aside, 'the' most impressive characteristic of this legendary actor and his wife, is their level of ardent conscious crusade to stay abreast of what truly matters in the scheme of life. This writer won't attempt to impress you by divulging the glimpse of private thought to which I was privy. But, in this age of intellectual barbarism, what averts that dominance is power couples like Morgan and Myrna Freeman who have an anchored sense of themselves and a stark awareness of what's globally important beyond the escapisms of Rodeo Drive and Monte Carlo. When they truly could, with the greatest of ease, design a life of escape by private jet to wherever they so desire, hold court and surround themselves with individuals who are dismissive of life's misgivings - and don't! — is beyond admirable. It was hugely exciting to see that an individual who so carefully chose acting roles with prevalence has also chosen 'not' to be ill equipped in social and ecological knowledge.

In addition to maintaining a union with a woman whose beauty doesn't end at the tip of her nose, but extends into her soul. Given the horde of superficial minds that govern the movie industry, it must be incredibly difficult to carve out and nurture a sense of propriety in upholding one's beliefs. Especially when they're honorable. Talking and breaking bread with Morgan and Myrna, you forget with whom you're speaking, because there is no

sense of pretense, elitism or grandeur. Myrna, in her own right is an accomplished costume designer with an earned Masters Degree. In betwixt and between our conversation, many people interrupted seeking photo ops with Freeman; yet, never once did he allow their rudeness to affect his willingness to accommodate their requests. It's pretty astonishing to see a man whose running buddies are the likes of Nelson Mandela, Clint Eastwood and X-US Presidents conduct himself with gracious patience and attentiveness to intrusive total strangers. But, with everything we know and have come to love about Morgan Freeman, how could we possibly expect anything less.

WHERE THE ROAD TO CLARKSDALE LEADS

When Morgan and Myrna decided to make Clarksdale, Mississippi home, they needed an attorney. In walked native son, lawyer and businessman Bill Lockett. Morgan, Myrna, Bill and his wife Francine formed a friendship. The Freemans and the Locketts had no place to dine when home, comparable to their travels. So, the magic money wand was waved in very good taste - and a friendship/partnership gave new life to the concept of fine dining and hanging out in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Think about it. An international Hollywood couple and a successful and worldly local couple can 'only' avail the best of all worlds. Cement that formula with delicious Southern flare - and it definitely becomes 'the' train to board.

MADIDI!

Southern class — very much misunderstood and underrated, 'is' alive and flourishing in MADIDI. Clarksdale's burgeoning highest profile restaurant is in a league defined by the spectrum of impeccable tradition and contemporary style one could only find in the deep South. The MADIDI experience begins at first glance. The millisecond you glimpse the structure as you drive onto Delta Avenue, the process of altering your vision ensues. It's not necessary to see its name affixed on the building. You instantly know, 'this is MADIDI.' It's a world within a world. Once beyond the main entrance, you're at once transformed to any high end tranquil dining house you'd attach the description Big City elegance — only without the nocturnal street clamor. It's as if a detour, has led to a clandestine treasure. You almost get the feeling of

being in a private house where dining is comfortably appointed to be a relaxing experience.

All Food Critics/Reviewers agree that the appearance of a restaurant has much to do with overall appeal. MADIDI does not engulf you in its eye catching art. As you visually gravitate, you're compelled to be a bit daring and leave your element to explore its intrigue. After spending quality time with Myrna and Francine, you deduce the hands that lay the overall sketch of MADIDI. Myrna's gifted impressive creative stroke is evident in combination with her cultural edge. She has a brilliant knack for coziness. Twenty First Century restaurants call for someone to have green thumb expertise. Whether it's identifying a source - or, having it yourself. Francine's could recreate the proverbial beanstalk!

Venturing to credit Myrna and Francine with hatching the interior plot is probably 'not' far off the mark!

MADIDI, THE TALK OF THE GLOBE!

It's no surprise, but it might be of interest to know, that the likes of Condé Nast, National Geographic Traveler, GQ, Bon Appétit, New York, ELLE, TV Guide, Food & Wine, USA Today, Southern Living, Oxford/American, Premier, The Food Network, CNN/PEOPLE, Turner South - and these are just the greater known - have all made the pilgrimage to Clarksdale, Mississippi to MADIDI! The Freeman/Lockett combination is a salute to the Clarksdale community as a valid contribution to superb culinary taste and panache. This is no "snake oil" eatery.

Come to MADIDI because a famous actor is co-owner, and you just might get to see him up close. This good looking Southern restaurant (and there are no tables with swings), translates to dazzling — and delicious to hallelujah - and, you pray no one is looking 'cause you are gonna lick your plate. I'm talkin' slap 'yo mamma good! You don't have to navigate through the sauces to get to the goodies. You want to drag the sauce along and not lose a single drop.

MADIDI is more than living up to its Mission Statement in every culinary emotion. Here's MADIDI's Mission Statement: As with any cuisine it holds true for Madidi; to create the finest dishes you must start from the noblest ingredients. At Madidi our aim is deceptively simple - to offer to you the best food available. To this end we admit only first class produce, applying to it traditional skills that know no shortcuts. Favorite

dishes are as a standard against which others will come to be judged. Unfamiliar dishes will lead you further into the intricacies of the culinary art form. Since seasonality is implicit in the freshness of food, some specialties will be available only when their time is ripe. Now, however, is the moment when we wish you to understand something of the heights to which cooking can soar.



Chef Lee Craven

ENJOY THE CHEF AND HIS FOOD

Having experienced all of the above, my simple response is 'away we go.' Chef de Cuisine Lee Craven, trumpets his infusion of culinary creations expressly for MADIDI, to blend with Southern favorites, served alongside dashes of imported ingredients. He says "it's your GrandMa's meals all dressed up." Chef Craven does this on a twice-weekly ever changing menu schedule.

At our visit, Chef Craven, who is a product of the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), was one week into his new kitchen and you could already identify his clever devotedness to the highest quality of ingredients, taking flavorful cooking to another level with brash originality. Word-of-mouth is already abounding (and we were only there for a weekend) about Chef Lee (as I've heard him affectionately called), stirring the MADIDI pots and whipping up an uncompromising commitment to presentation with elegant preparation. Be warned. It's best 'not' to eat for at least three to four days before visiting so you'll have plenty of room to eat as much as your stomach can hold. I'm always teased about eating like a bird. Well, at MADIDI I did just that. Big Bird!

Chef Craven's contribution is far from subtle and is delightfully noticeable, changing the quality and the way in which food is prepared. Chef Lee brings his Tennessee reputation for his unique seasonings and

flavorful compositions to MADIDI's kitchen. Personally, Chef Craven is warm, inviting and bubbling over with enthusiastic ideas. You can't help but contemplate the impact of such an attitude on the food. The word erratic never comes to mind. Chef Lee keenly addressed his never changing goal to avoid sauces that sabotage and to put taste in total concert rather than at odds. His salmon with saffron side sauce, which fulfilled my every concept of tantalizing, was prepared with Chef Lee's always method reduction sauce without butter, much to my thrill. I found him to be atop his game!

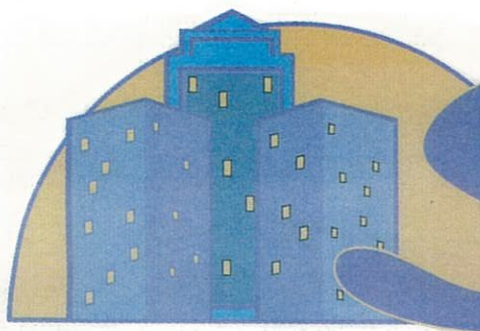
At this point, I'd be absolutely disconsolate if I thought I'd never eat this man's food again. If you dined at MADIDI prior to June 10th, 'though taking in the visual and basking in the ambience was well worth the trip, you nonetheless missed out on MADIDI's recent coupe: Chef de Cuisine Lee Craven and Pastry Chef Trish Berry. You simply must return for the full aroma of this divine duo. Food is now very much an essential aspect of the draw. Additionally, private all occasion catering is being offered.

THE PIÈCE DE RÉSTANCE

Aaahhh! Pastry Chef Trish Berry. The Memphis Culinary Academy really turns out the crème de la crème! What a whimsical and wondrous spatula she wields. I say so because she completely bewitched me with her trance like desserts. I went to Clarksdale not having had refined sugar or chocolate, literally in skate-eight years. I broke all of my self-imposed food restrictions.

First, I succumbed to Chef Lee Craven's intoxication. If that wasn't bad enough, I then ate three desserts. Never dangle three layers of chocolate truffle in a martini glass, a two-layer chocolate nut cake and Grand Mariner Crème Brulée before a woman! I shared them with Mariea and Stephonia. In all honesty, I 'fought' over them with Mariea and Stephonia. If I could have gagged and bound them and run off with all Pastry Chef Berry's desserts, the two of them would still be in Clarksdale. Sinfully delicious!

Francine tried to forewarn us. No fine dining is complete without a full stocked bar. From MADIDI'S mahogany and granite bar, designed by Bill Lockett, my cohorts, Steph and Mariea who happen to be strict Margarita girls (and have traveled the globe extensively tasting & testing), proclaim MADIDI's to be 'the' best yet.



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JULY 17, 2003

THE BIRMINGHAM TIMES ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE



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The Bad Boys II movie premiere

ENTERTAINMENT . . .3



Martin Lawrence and Will Smith star in Bad Boys II

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Actor Morgan Freeman's Stellar Blues Heaven: Ground Zero Blues Club, Clarksdale, Mississippi

by Saahara Glaudé
GLAUDÉ PRODUCTIONS
SG Media, LLC
www.glaudeproductions.com

UPDATE

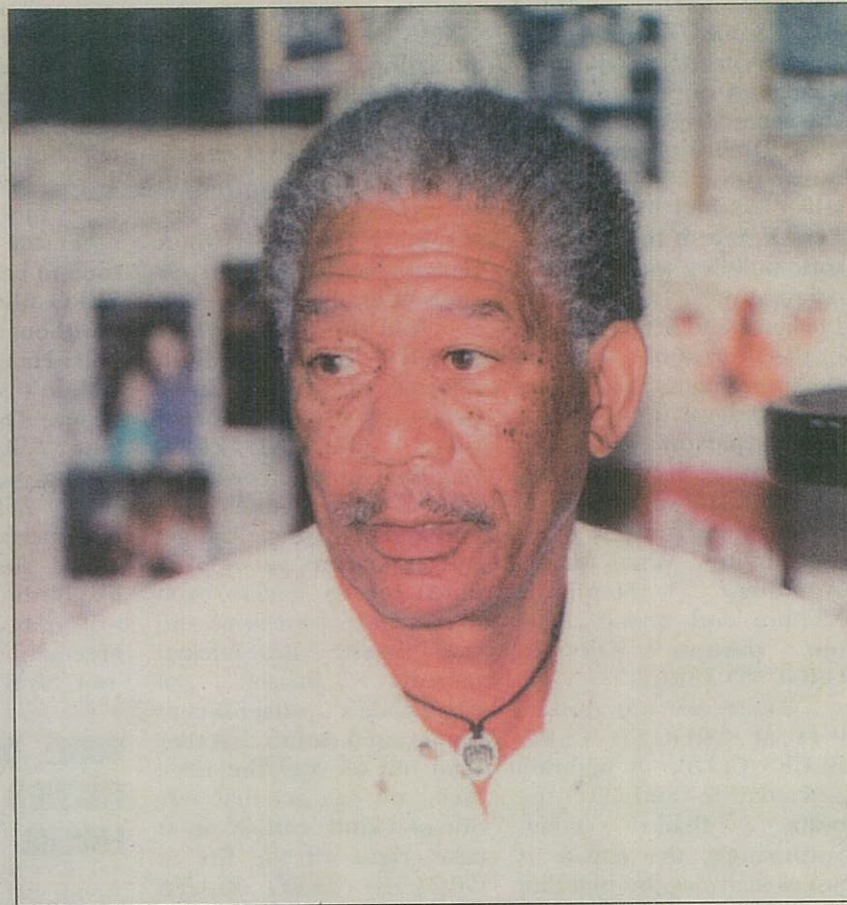
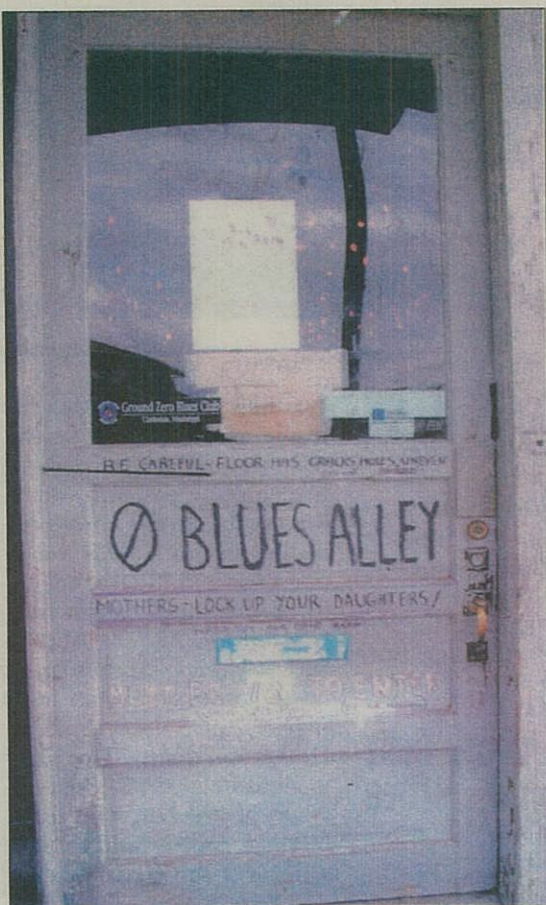
To bring you up to snuff, you really need to read the preceding article in last week's TIMES. There's a partnership going on between Morgan & Myrna Freeman and Bill and Francine Lockett. Both Morgan and Bill are natives of Clarksdale, Mississippi. Much has come out of this merger. Last week we introduced you to their collaborative fancy smancy, 'you'd better know a little bit of French', fine dining restaurant named MIDIDI. Our focus at this writing is their GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB.

NOW 'WE' KNOW

The road leading to actor/businessman Morgan Freeman's Clarksdale, Mississippi continues on a direct path to his GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB. If you missed Freeman's profile, you can either log onto www.thebirminghamtimes.com or get a hard copy of last week's The Birmingham Times.

The consensus of astounding response I've received in such a very short time span, echoes comments like "I didn't know 'all that' about Morgan Freeman"! And/or "I had no idea Morgan Freeman was from Mississippi!"

Here's a footnote to that coverage on Freeman. I think it's fairly accurate to say that many moviegoers have a favorite Morgan Freeman film. Although some may be like me: hard put to pinpoint an exact favorite. But, I do have a favorite line and scene. The line is one he narrates in "Shawshank Redemption", and goes thusly: "That place where I live is much more drab when they're gone, I



Above left: The graffiti-adorned door to one of the country's premier "Jip Joints," the Ground Zero Blues Club in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Above right: One of Ground Zero's founding partners, actor Morgan Freeman. All photos by Stephonia McLinn.

miss my friend. I'm so excited I can barely sit or hold a thought in my head!" And, my favorite Freeman scene, also from "Shawshank", is the scene after he's released from prison and begins to dig that money out from the rocky area, while systematically peering over his shoulders with the fear of God in his eyes, all the time surveying the area - looking the way 'only' an oppressed American Black man can. And then not only discovering the money - but, that he is safe and unseen by any onlookers. You're right there with him, fear for fear. That's one of those priceless mystical movie moments.

MORGAN & MYRNA AND BILL & FRANCINE'S "JUKE JOINT"

Ladies and gentlemen welcome to the 'Jip Joint' of 'Jip Joints!' The best way for me to even attempt to define

GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB is to tell you about one of its 'Bill Lockett' wall hangings, that evokes it far better than any words I could possibly conjure. The picture of which I speak is aptly titled "Land of Make Believe." Have you ever heard of or seen it? It consists of everything - and I underscore 'everything' - from any fairy tale, saying, quote, wish, road sign, character or reference you can bring to mind - all splashed into one picture. Now, close your eyes and envision everything 'that' encompasses.

Before I get too ahead of myself, you may be wondering about the chosen name of this Clarksdale, Mississippi Blues Club. Well, it's really kinda' prophetic in that GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB opened on May 27, 2001 - five months 'prior' to 9/11. Its name is so, in honor of the many bluesmen who birthed the Blues Music genre right

from Clarksdale.

Clarksdale, Mississippi (for those of us who don't know) 'is' the official Blues global jump off point. It's the real deal home of the Blues. In case you missed this, GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB opened on an extremely high note with some two hundred hand picked guests, including Stars and Starlets. Private Jets were a' flying all over Mississippi! The hot ticket address is 0 Blues Alley (yep! "0"), as in GROUND "ZERO" BLUES CLUB!

Freeman himself is the son of a Mother who played piano and organ in and around the very community that hosts GROUND ZERO and MADIDI Restaurant. As founders and owners of GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB, Morgan & Myrna Freeman and Bill & Francine Lockett proclaimed from its inception that the venue intent "is to celebrate the area's rich

blues heritage and to produce a forum in which that heritage can continue".

Currently, the Region's best Blues musicians grace the GROUND ZERO stage and a mega Blues movie they've dubbed "JOURNEY TO CLARKSDALE" is in the making. The documovie will feature some of the genre's mega Blues artists and is scheduled to begin in October, 2003.

AND ALL THAT BLUES!

It's no secret - unless you literally have been on another planet — that for a time, Blues music prevailed on the cultural backs of non-Blacks worldwide, saving it from extinction and loss to American culture. Many of us know of the days when Black Americans referred to Blues as "the devil's music" and banned it from daylight activities. That included any and all teaching or duplication in institutes of learning.

It remains today, only one of two music art forms the salvation of which depend in large part on 'equal' joint collaborative effort from Black and White individuals behind the scenes and onstage.

GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB sits boldly, catty-cornered at the very dead end of Delta Avenue, the same street that houses MADIDI. It's waaaay - within walking distance - down the street, flushed to the right. Per Luckett, it too is an historic building with a host of originality. In fact, the Luckett's and Freeman's are in the process of converting the upper floors to loft quarters. Believe it or not, as busy a person as Luckett seems to be, he was actually adorned in work clothes, hammer and various other tools in tow, when Mariea Wooding, Stephonia McLinn and myself made our daytime visit to GROUND ZERO.

There are two distinct lives at GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB. A nightlife and a daylife - and never the twain shall meet. Surprisingly, the daylife is just as active as the nightlife in terms of people traffic. While there with Myrna & Morgan and Francine & Bill, another "Travel Channel" episode occurred. I'm talking visitors from everywhere. EVERYWHERE! Canned Blues music provides the atmosphere and it is lively and fun-filled.

The daytime affords the opportunity to see up close, the unbelievable graffiti. Graffiti on the bar. Graffiti on the tables. Graffiti on the floors. Graffiti on the ceiling. Graffiti here, there and literally everywhere! It's taking over the premises like

the old sci-fi "Blob." GROUND ZERO is a serious club with a daytime open bar and a smokin' kitchen. But, that is the daytime. Nighttime? That's a horse of another color. Loud music landlocked in a cloud of graffiti, sprinkled with XMAS tree lights. Gyrating, pulsating, hip shaking, rhythmically animated patrons in motion, is the order for GROUND ZERO's nights. The catch is that the patrons are like "WILD ON" - coming from everywhere imaginable with interspersions of locals.

And the food? Where MADIDI has a carefully selected Chef who 'can' if necessary, do the "Spago" thing - GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB's "cook's dé jeuner" pride themselves on flipping and frying. And get this! You can get a plate lunch for six bucks. And that includes your drink and your desert! Bill Luckett proudly boasts of Clarksdale's magnificent pond raised catfish that they send out all over the USA. Well, you can get that very one-of-a-kind catfish in a cake, right off the fire at GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB.

Talk about your Bluesy Funk Fest. You got your XMAS lights strewn, your spittoon, your pool tables, your loud 'live' music, your favorite southern fried food frying right before your eyes - a sorta Tempura down in the Delta style — and then you've got your walls and support beams frozen in combat for space to accommodate all the international graffiti. There are wall hangings that look as though they were literally snatched from Fred Sanford's junkyard, displaying vintage Blues posters

- and, God only knows what else. I must say that if in fact there were actually a cat dragging stuff in - 'this' would be its headquarters!

Now, GROUND ZERO is a smoke-filled — rather spacious Juke Joint - the only escape hatch being the great outdoors. And oh yeah, it's just as funky as inside. It's Great Grandma's attic porch stuff, a step below shabby chic. But listen up! There is a rockin', dance 'til you drop, meetin' folk from the other side of the globe, good time to be had at GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB! This is without question a "Grown Folks Hang-Out" - mind you, I didn't say "old folks". I believe Oscar Wilde put it best: "Age is a matter of feeling, not years." This is simply definitely and without question not a hip-hop crowd stopover. Someone like Birdman might show up just because Morgan Freeman is part owner; but, 'not' his peeps.

SOME OF YOUR BEST FRIENDS ARE BLUES LOVERS

I've always viewed Blues as being an art form of dignity with high standards determined by its quality of heroic content. In my research, I discovered some startling facts about Blues. More than 48 percent of the music buying population state they "like" or "strongly like" Blues music. Comparatively, 47 percent say the same about hard rock, and 33 percent about rap. Blues consumers are well educated (52 percent) with incomes above the national median. A large percentage (75 percent) of the Blues consumers have attended live Blues performances in the past year. Blues consumers buy large numbers of recordings in all styles of music. 72 percent of Blues consumers purchase more than 10 CDs per year. This group of CD purchasers is spread across all demographic groups. If you're a Blues lover, you're in an elite majority of distinction and you need to know about your latest 'zone.'



Morgan and Myrna Freeman and Saahara GlauDé

I did emphasize that the music is "LIVE!" at night, didn't I? There's an adventure waiting just for you in Mississippi and it's not connected in any way to a casino. Bear in mind, the majority of individuals patronizing GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB when I was there, may have come from far away places but, were 'not' Hollywood stars. The thrill is definitely in the experience of the surroundings, historic value and camaraderie of the pilgrimage.

"TURN THE HIGHWAY TO DUST, CATCH A PLANE IF YOU MUST"

There are several ways to arrive in Clarksdale. The drive into the Delta is lush. If you have your own plane, you can contact MADIDI or GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB management, and they'll provide landing instructions. Commercial flights arrive a little under an hour away. You can rent a vehicle and drive the remainder. Maybe you're heading to New Orleans, Florida or some State in the general vicinity. If so, you'll not regret including Clarksdale, Mississippi in your travelogue. Stateside travel is very much in this season.

The resurgence occurring in Clarksdale is making a definitive mark on the tourist industry. It is evident that race relations have healed and Delta communities are harmoniously thriving

and working and playing together. Morgan & Myrna Freeman and Bill & Francine Luckett have worked tirelessly to contribute to the creation of History as a re-write of what was ignorant and offensive.

This writer urges you to take the trip to Clarksdale and experience firsthand the evolution of change for the better heading directly into the future. And who knows. There's always the chance you'll see the magnificent Morgan Freeman. Even if you don't, the experience stands on its own merit. You'll desire to return again and again to the home of the Blues, Clarksdale, Mississippi.

GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB
(MADIDI Restaurant Info On THIS Website) www.groundzerobluesclub.com
0 Blues Alley
Clarksdale, Mississippi
38614
662-621-9009
HOURS OF OPERATION:
LIVE MUSIC: Friday and Saturday
DINNER: Wednesday - Saturday
LUNCH: Monday-Friday: 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday: 5 p.m. - UNTIL Friday: 5 p.m. - 1 a.m. Saturday: 6 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Saahara GlauDé is an independent Producer and owner of **GLAUDE PRODUCTIONS*SG MEDIA, LLC** www.glaudeproductions.com



Myrna Freeman, Francine Luckett, Mariea Wooding, Saahara GlauDé and Morgan Freeman



Freeman's friend and partner Bill Lockett relaxes at Madidi

MADIDI's to be 'the' best yet. That's some endorsement — especially coming from them, when I personally know how they feel about their Margaritas!

I'm a White Wine gal, having had the house wine from Maxim's to the Ritz Carlton, Laguna Beach. MADIDI's is hands down, 'thumbs up! The Freemans and Lucketts share a joint obsession in procuring the very best they have to offer in an unstuffy non-pretentious manner. You won't find traces of a New York big-deal style restaurant in MADIDI. It's minimalist chic with a 'big-deal menu' that surely spoils and pampers the palate and 'big-deal service' that warms the heart.

MAKING HISTORY

If you're fortunate enough to dine at MADIDI when Bill and Francine Lockett are in tow, you'll be charmed! Bill is a mesmerizing storyteller and knows every crack and crevice in not only MADIDI, but Clarksdale. Straight from his mouth tales of the sprawling two-story turn of the century building, take you back sometime between 1900 and 1930 when a raging fire destroyed forty percent of its mass.

According to Lockett, the massive door greeting you atop the stairs, that I instantly took for expressive art, is actually "an old fashion fire door that operates by having soft metal that melted by the fire coming through a concrete opening, break the metal, and the door by gravity shut - and saved sixty percent of the building that now is MADIDI."

Lockett goes on to share its history as "a dry goods store for thirty to forty years - then for fifty years it was a furniture store, for ten years a women's and men's clothing store - then the building set empty for five years."

Looking around, you conclude it was waiting on the Lockett's and the Freeman's. I had to inquire about the hodge-podge art, and per Lockett, every piece has a direct tie to Mississippi - save for "The Jazzmen"; which Morgan transported from Paris - and "The

Blues Player" at the top of the stairs, which is part of Myrna's personal collection.

Bill's favorite lives over the mahogany & granite bar 'he' designed. When driving from his law practice in Memphis, Tennessee, he discovered and fell in love with the 30x68 "Male Reclining Nude Figure", doing so on a wooden door. It's from Lockett's ecological knowledge I learn of Clarksdale the land: three hundred miles inland from the mouth of the river. I learn further "that the flood plain deposited the rich soil and it formed Delta, like the Greek letter D. The very rich deposit of soil built up over years giving the Delta its now historic cotton soil. It's a Delta in shape and because it's alluvial". Well, I haven't heard that term since geography. That's gotta' be a 'Delta' thing!

Lockett told me of how when cotton was king - selling for one dollar a pound - tremendous wealth reigned in Clarksdale and that now "it's an economically deprived area considered to be America's Third World."

SO LONG JIM CROW

Cotton being king doesn't conjure up pleasantries; especially for those of us touched devastatingly by its growth. You'd have to be oblivious not to think of the irony of the economic impact Morgan and Myrna are having in the Delta. It brings tears to your eyes knowing that all that cotton pickin' was not in vain. Morgan Freeman gracefully moved his lineage from those 'very' cotton fields, partnering with Lockett - and transformed as Clarksdale's Pied Piper's to economic growth. Spending time with Freeman and Lockett, you see how in coming together, they guardian the best of that awful time: love of the land and genteel kindness. These two Southern sons who started out on opposite sides of life, bonding like brothers in their effort to uplift the community-at-large, effectuate the belief of equality.

Francine Lockett's Southern savvy is elevating and welcoming with a noticeable sense of style and sass in harmo-

ny with Myrna's global refinement. Francine also has stored history. According to Francine, the name "MADIDI" came about while she and Bill were watching "National Geographic".

Madidi is a forest in Bolivia covering low-land, grass-land, high-land, mountains 'and' desert. Bill and Francine were so enthralled with the name, they instantly committed to give it to any restaurant in their future. Per Francine, they talked about the name so much that their grandson Buchanan calls her "Madidi". And when she asked him why, he replied "because that's your name!" I guess a GrandMother by any other name would still be MADIDI.

The Lockett's complete the MADIDI experience. You hit a sure bulls-eye if you dine when the Freeman's and the Lockett's are there. The emphasis is truly not on Morgan being a big star and Myrna international in scope, as it is the overall down home reception that's so freely and generously extended by Myrna & Morgan in combination with Francine & Bill. MADIDI's upstairs walls are adorned with publication endorsements and a continuum of local talent art, leading to hidden sanctuaries bearing names like "PUINA ROOM, "TACANA ROOM" and more, for private dining parties for many or few. While we were there, we shared the downstairs main dining area with a geomalgam of guests from seventy miles away — St. Louis, Missouri — Rome, Georgia - Australia;



Co-owner Francine Lockett and Maria Wooding enjoying themselves at Madidi.

and, since opening in May of 2001, guests have flown in by private jet, arrived in limo's, hailed from all parts of California, New York, detoured from Chicago heading to Florida, dropped in from other continents. It's pretty dawgone unbelievable! Guests have literally come from hither, thither and yon. It just doesn't get any better than that. I did stress that this is Clarksdale? In Mississippi?

WHERE TO STAY

If you're going to Clarksdale - and this writer certainly hopes so - as benevolent as the Freemans and Lucketts are, you're on you own when it comes to room and board. But, that is not a bad thing! Let me tell you. There is a magnificently restored three hundred year old two-story mansion, dressed from her high ceilings to her unbelievable bare original floors in timeless furnishings, that are not readily available here in America, and were shipped from Parisian antique shops. Her name is The Belle Clark. She's stunning.

THE BELLE CLARK

Drug by mules from the riverbank over one hundred years ago and placed inside a frame of towering sweet smelling trees that are only found in the deep South, 300 year old The Belle Clark is to this writer the absolute most remarkable Bed and Breakfast to date. You simply want to move in and can't resist picturing yourself as the head of the manor - ready to entertain or just stretch out and snooze the day away, only to occasionally open your eyes to pinch yourself.

Lillie Strohm and her husband painstakingly rose this buried landmark from the dead. From her ceiling to floor hand-made chintz window dressings, to her custom-made bedding, all sewn by Lillie, The Belle Clark is — for those of us who languish

off and relax - make yourself at home. The primary restriction - which I applaud - is NO SMOKING.

Lillie prepares a complimentary scrumptious Southern breakfast. Dining in this step back in history extravagantly spaced 18th Century fully dressed room, this writer could not ignore the images of African descended slaves entering only to serve. Sitting there being served, I could feel the fluttering of their angelic wings. Oh, yes! Destination Clarksdale is a wonderful package for couples, singles, or solos. The Belle Clark is just around the corner from MADIDI and positively the recommended place to make your temporary home.

FAMOUS FOLKS, BIG CITY DELTA DINING — COULD THERE POSSIBLY BE MORE?

Now, no weekend would be complete unless you could kick your heels up and throw down! Do you remember my mention of a bluesy Blues Club? Well, the Morgan & Myrna Freeman, Bill & Francine Lockett partnership includes a joint - and I mean 'joint' — about three blocks down from MADIDI, they named GROUND ZERO BLUES CLUB.

Everybody and their Momma come from all over this world, to par-tay at GROUND ZERO. In fact, a movie is in the making, the Freemans and Lucketts are calling: "JOURNEY TO CLARKSDALE" — featuring an array of Blues Stars. Dig out your dancing shoes and lock up your daughters or, should I say lockdown your men folk! I'll tell you all about it next week.

RATINGS:

MADIDI: Maria Wooding THE BIRMINGHAM TIMES Food Editor, Gives MADIDI FIVE STARS ***** AAAAA

Madidi
164 Delta Avenue
Clarksdale, Mississippi 38614
Dinner starts @ 6 p.m. Until (Tuesday through Saturday)
Bar opens @ 5p.m. Until
OFFICE, GROUPS & PARTIES:
662-627-7724
RESERVATIONS:
662-627-7770
www.madidires.com
EMAIL: from the site

The Belle Clark:
FIVE STARS ***** AAAAA
The Belle Clark, Inc. Bed and Breakfast
211 Clark Street
Clarksdale, Mississippi 38614
662-627-1280
www.thebelleclark.com EMAIL:
info@thebelleclark.com

in yesteryear's French provincial opulence, ensconced in a grand house that would make Scarlet go back out and dig up some more yams - to absolutely die for!

In the back of the primary house, The Belle Clark extends her quarters to what was once the private schoolhouse for her owner's children. You can't overlook the Strohm's obvious décor choices that don't beckon guests 'to look but don't dare touch or sit'. No such thing. Inviting, approachable, touchable - and come on in and take your shoes