

brooklyn's Jazzy Times

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Publisher
lorna tate

Editor
donovan tate

Staff
d. tyler davis
l. lourdes shabazz
n.m. shabazz

Photography
frank lott photography

Layout and Design
n.m. shabazz

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brooklyn's Jazzy Times
1701 South Lamar Street
Dallas, Texas 75215
214.428.0025
www.brooklynjazzcafe.com

different strokes: the life of a child prodigy

by n.m. shabazz

Sometimes, it was hard to be Gary Wayne Coleman. The comic child prodigy, born February 8, 1968 in Zion, Illinois was put up for adoption at birth and taken in as an infant by a blue collar family; Willie Coleman, a pharmaceutical representative, and Edmonia Sue Coleman, a nurse. At two years old, Coleman was diagnosed with nephritis, a kidney condition.

The disease would ultimately stunt his growth and produce a laundry list of health-related problems for him over the years.

Fully grown, Coleman would only grow to 4 feet 8 inches in height. By the time he was five years old, he had already had his first kidney transplant and would require regular dialysis treatment for the rest of his life.

Yet, there was a bright light ahead. Cute and cuddly, Coleman was a natural acting talent who loved the spotlight.

Quoted in a 1979 Los Angeles Times article as saying her son had always been a ham, Mrs. Coleman and her husband encouraged young Gary to act. Even at such an early age, memorizing lines seem to come easy to him and he didn't cower under the spotlight of the cameras. Coleman started doing television commercials for companies like McDonald's and Hallmark. Eventually, he was brought to the attention of legendary television producer Norman Lear of *Good Times*' and *The Jeffersons*' fame.



Gary Wayne Coleman,
February 8, 1968 — May 28, 2010
Photo courtesy of ABC News

Sensing the comedic talent in Coleman, Lear sought to build a show around his budding star. Originally called *45 Minutes From Harlem*, at 10 years old Coleman became the biggest child star on television when *Different Strokes* debuted in 1979 on NBC.

On the show, Coleman played Arnold Jackson, the youngest of two brothers who gets adopted by a rich, single white male philanthropist who stays in a penthouse. The show was an instant success and was unique in that it tackled many race and class topics.

Coleman became known for his catchphrase —“Whatchu talkin' 'bout?” — usually aimed at his on-screen brother Willis Jackson, played by actor Todd Bridges. The sitcom was so embedded in American culture that former first

lady Nancy Reagan appeared on it in 1983 to make her anti-drug pitch. Coleman proved to be the comedic muscle of the sitcom. As *Different Strokes* and his popularity rose, so did his salary; from \$1,500 to \$70,000 an episode. *Different Strokes* ran six years on NBC and two on ABC.

However, life after *Different Strokes* proved to be anything but a bed of roses for Coleman. Having always admired actor Sidney Poitier, Coleman would never be considered for a serious acting role. In a large part, *Different Strokes* type-casted him and there weren't very many roles calling for an adult 4 foot 8 inch black male actor. There was also the issue of Coleman's deteriorating health.

“I suffer a little bit from Napoleonism, if you will,” Coleman told CNN in 2003. *“I don't like being short. I wish I was tall because I'd be accepted in other, more tall circles or adult circles, if you will.”*

By the time he was 14 years old, he had undergone two kidney transplants and was on dialysis while taping *Different Strokes*. Also, though there were reports Coleman had amassed \$18 million from acting—mainly on *Different Strokes*—he found out that his parents had stolen and misused much of it. He sued them and advisers for misappropriating money that should have gone into his trust fund.

His parents countered Coleman had
(Continued on page three)

superfreak: remembering rick james

by I. Lourdes Shabazz

Bass player Rick James was equal parts bad boy and a phenomenal musical talent. Known as one of the last purveyors of funk, he left an indelible mark on Rhythm and Blues.

Born James Ambrose Johnson, Jr. in Buffalo, New York, James was the third oldest of eight children. His father was an auto-worker and his mother a former dancer. James' father would later end up leaving the family. His mother made ends meet by running numbers for the mob. At age 15, James ran away from home and joined the Naval Reserves, but quickly came to regret his decision. Besides the rigors of the military, weekend duty interfered with his musical ambitions. His antics got him assigned to active duty and he was scheduled to be shipped off the Vietnam.

Terrified as to his situation, James went AWOL and fled to Toronto, Ontario in 1964. There, under the assumed name Big Jimmy, he formed his first band, the Mynah Birds; future Steppenwolf musician Nick St. Nicholas was also originally in the group. Having produced their first single for Columbia Records of Canada—*Mynah Bird Hop/Mynah Bird Song*—the group ended up auditioning for Motown Records after a few roster changes in musicians. Upon hearing that James was AWOL, the label encouraged James to turn himself into the FBI, which he did.

After spending a year in a military prison, James moved to Detroit and found work as a staff songwriter for Motown. He also continued to be a journeyman bass player, performing in or starting



Rick James
February 1, 1948 — August 6, 2004

several more bands. Eventually, he was signed to Motown in 1978.

James' first breakthrough hit was *You and I* from his **Come Get It** (1978) album, which also featured the underground hit *Mary Jane* on it. **Come Get It** would later go gold.

Throughout the late 1970's into the 1980's, James had more hit songs—*Busting Out*, *Give It To Me Baby*, *Super Freak*, *Cold Blooded* among them. His 1981 concept album—**Street Songs**—went triple platinum. James collaborated and penned songs for many other artists and groups, such as the Temptations, his protégé Teena Marie, and The Mary James Girls, a group he formed with four females.

James' popularity and staying power seemed to have no limit; so, it would seem, never did his vices. He started delving heavily into drugs and living the life of the myth he had created. He was both a sex symbol and poster child for recreational drugs. The combination was

dangerous. For a period of five years, James stated in interviews that he spent \$7,000 a week on cocaine consumption.

"I made so much," he stated in a 2002 Bankmate interview. "You have to understand, I wrote and produced millions and millions of selling records, so my publishing company alone was worth millions of dollars." James went on to explain that even after his bank account had gotten down to only a few hundred thousand dollars, another royalty check would come in to replenish it so his drug consumption would continue unabated.

In 1993, James was convicted of assaulting two women. The first case occurred in 1991 when James and his girlfriend tied a woman to a chair, burned her with a hot crack pipe, and forced her to perform sex acts during a cocaine binge at his West Hollywood Home. The second assault occurred in 1992 in James' hotel room.

He would end up serving two years in Folsom Prison. In 1997, he released a new album, but during a comeback tour a year later suffered a stroke while performing at Denver's Mammoth Events Center.

James' career enjoyed a revival of sorts when comedian Dave Chappelle started portraying him on his highly popular, but short lived comedic *Chappelle's Show*.

James died the morning of August 6, 2004. His personal assistant found him dead as result of pulmonary failure and cardiac failure. He is survived by his daughter Ty, sons Rick Jr. and Tazman, and granddaughter Jasmine and Charisma.

different strokes: the life of a child prodigy (continued from page one)

been brainwashed by his manager and that he was not competent to handle his own financial affairs. In the end, he won a \$1.28 million settlement, however his relationship with his parents was ruined. A few years later in 1999, he filed for bankruptcy.

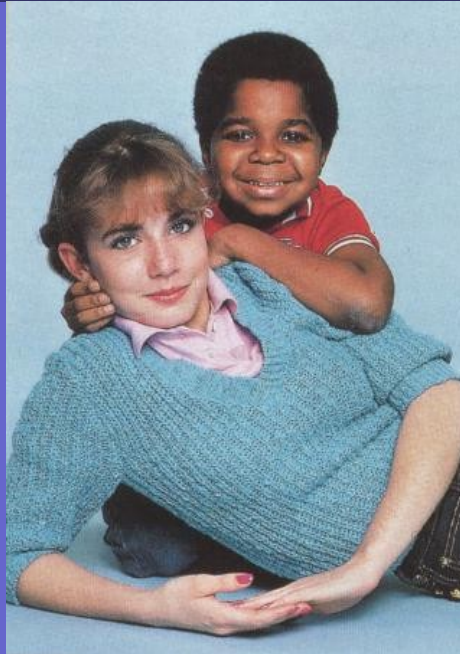
"Family never meant anything to me," Coleman once said, "but a whole lot of trouble that I don't need."

Yet at times he appeared to be his own worst enemy. Angry and bitter at being unemployable, Coleman admitted in a television interview that he had twice tried to kill himself by overdosing on pills. Eventually, he found a job working as a security guard at a Los Angeles mall.

In 1999, Coleman was accused of attacking a woman at work who had recognized him and had asked him for his autograph. The two got into a yelling match that escalated in blows being exchanged. Taken to court, Coleman pleaded no contest to battery.

As CNN.com reported, the last years of Coleman's life seemed to be one ordeal after another; "*Gary Coleman cited for disorderly conduct (2007), Gary Coleman in alleged bowling alley scuffle (2008), Gary Coleman charged with reckless driving (2008), Gary Coleman hospitalized for another seizure (2010).*"

In 2003, in California's recall election to replace then-Governor Gray Davis, Coleman was among 135 candidates on the ballot. He finished in eighth place behind Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flint; Arnold Schwarzenegger would eventually win the election.



Dana Plato (center) played Coleman's adopted sister Kimberly Drummond. Picture courtesy of the Associated Press

By Fall 2005, Coleman moved to Utah; reports by police officers show they were called to his residence more than 20 times for incidences. Some visits were in response to calls where he had said he had taken dozens of Oxycontin pills and wanted to commit suicide. In 2007, he married 22 year old Shannon Price whom he had met on the set of the 2006 comedy **Church Ball**. Theirs was a tumultuous relationship.

Nine months after marrying, they appeared on **Divorce Court**, but worked out a public reconciliation. However, over the next few years they would be arrested several times for disorderly conduct. In January 2010, Coleman was jailed for domestic abuse.

On May 26, 2010, Coleman became sick at his Santaquin, Utah home and was taken to the hospital in Provo, Utah, and was placed on

life support. Two days later, he died from a brain hemorrhage.

Coleman's life and death mirrored the tragedies that had befallen several of the child stars from the former sitcom. Some call it *The Curse of Different Strokes*. Dana Plato, who played sister Kimberly Drummond, went through her own share of trials and tribulations. Having developed a panache for recreational drugs and drinking as a teenager, she left the show early in 1984 because she had gotten pregnant.

Though she would later marry her son's father, Rock guitarist Kenny Lambert, the two divorced in 1990; Lambert was awarded custody of their son, Tyler Lambert. Unable to find serious acting roles or keep a steady job, Plato tried desperately several times to resurrect her career, eventually starring in a soft porn film, **Different Strokes: The Story of Jack and Jill...and Jill**.

She died of an overdose of Valium and Vicodin on May 8, 1999 that was ruled as a suicide. Her son Lambert would follow in her footsteps nearly 11 years to the day of her death. On May 6, 2010 he died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

Bridges, who is still alive and pursuing a career in acting, battled his own share of drug problems for a number of years; having gotten hooked on cocaine in his 20's. In 1988, he was on trial for the murder of Kenneth "Tex" Clay, a reported Los Angeles drug dealer.

Defended by high-profile defense attorney Johnnie Cochran, Bridges was acquitted of the crime.

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brooklyn Jazz Calendar

June 2010

Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
June 1 Mahogany and the Jam Box	June 2 Name That Tune with Eric Willis	June 3 Tom Braxton	June 4 Melanie Dutton	June 5 Zac Harmon
June 8 The Buster Brown Band	June 9 Name that Tune with Eric Willis	June 10 The Freddie Jones Quartet	June 11 Natural Change	June 12 Zac Harmon
June 15 Dean Mills	June 16 Name That Tune with Eric Willis	June 17 Bobby Sparks and Friends	June 18 Ascension	June 19 Natural Change
June 22 Montrose	June 23 Name That Tune with Eric Willis	June 24 Breggett Rideau	June 25 Melanie Dutton <u>Special Guest</u> Michael Ward	June 26 Melanie Dutton
June 29 Domino Effect	June 30 Name That Tune with Eric Willis			

Monday June 21, 2010

Legendary Mondays

This Month's Legendary Artist

Herman Sample

7:00pm to 11:00pm

Sunday Jazz Brunch 11:00am – 4:00pm

Musical Performances 11:30am – 3:30pm

June 6 Freddie Jones	June 13 Carolyn Lee Jones	June 20 Melanie Dutton	June 27 Freddie Jones
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Jazzy Sunday Evenings with Mahogany and the Jam Box

Musical Performances 7:00pm – 11:00pm

Special Events @ brooklyn Jazz Cafe

Spoken Jazz, A SpokenWord Event—Tuesday June 1st @ 7:00PM

Name That Tune, featuring Eric Willis and Melanie Dutton—Wednesdays @ 7:00PM

Southern Triangle Resale Bazaar (main parking lot) —Saturday June 19th @ 8:00AM

Legendary Mondays, featuring Herman Sample—Monday June 21st @7:00PM

Southside Golf Classic (held at the Cedar Crest Golf Course) —Friday June 25th @ 8:00AM

*Out In The Open...*A Talent Showcase hosted by Domino Effect—Tuesday June 29th @ 7:00PM



the jazzy insert

blanche deveraux: the original cougar

by n.m. shabazz

I admit to being a big nerd who collects comic books (**X-Men** and the **Hulk**), is an avid fan of fantasy (*Lord of the Rings*), and is a voyeur of good science fiction (*Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, and *Star-gate SG-1*). I'm also man enough to admit that I'm a *Golden Girls* junkie who will miss actress Rue McClanahan, who played cougar Blanche Deveraux, on the show. McClanahan died June 3, 2010, at 1am after suffering a massive stroke.

Actually, before *The Golden Girls* debuted in 1985, the term cougar—as applied to sexy older women with a panache for younger men—wasn't in use yet. However, McClanahan as Deveraux helped to define it. She had class, money, sex appeal, and enough aggressiveness to tame even the most testosterone frisky male neophyte. In an Associated Press interview in 1987—the year she won an Emmy for **Outstanding Lead Actress**—McClanahan stated that Deveraux was an unusual role for her.

"Probably the closest I've ever done was Blanche DuBoise in 'A Streetcar Named Desire' at the Pasadena Playhouse. I think, too, that's where the name came from, although my character is not a drinker and not crazy."

McClanahan, born Edi-Rue McClanahan in Healdton, Oklahoma, February 12, 1934, started off as an actress mostly in off-Broadway and regional plays in the 1960's. Though she had done a few television commercials, it wasn't until producer Norman Lear cast her as the best friend to Beatrice Arthur's on-screen character in *Maude* (CBS) that McClanahan got away from the stage. After *Maude* ended in 1978, her next major television role was the short lived *Mamma's Family* (NBC) in 1983 where she played the role of



Rue McClanahan, second from right, with *The Golden Girls*' co-stars Estelle Getty (left) Bea Arthur and Betty White
Picture courtesy of NBC

Aunt Fran. It was here she met Betty White who played the uppity Ellen.

Yet, perhaps *The Golden Girls* and Deveraux will be for what McClanahan is best remembered. And it won't be because she played an older sex-crazed character who was ready to pounce on any unsuspecting good-looking man, either. It'll be because she brought depth to the character.

Deveraux was the epitome of layers. She was a divorced mother who did not have the best relationships with her children. She was very supportive of her friends, but highly competitive. She was also somewhat insecure and tried to hide that insecurity through false bravado and sensuousness. It is because of this, as Newsweek's Joshua Alston writes in the article, **McClanahan's Blanche: The Original Samantha**, that Deveraux, unlike her contemporary counterpart Samantha Jones in *Sex and the City*, is adored while Jones is looked upon less flatteringly by fans.

"Where 'Sex and the City' places disproportionate focus on Carrie (Sarah Jessica Parker), 'The Golden Girls' gave all four of its women equal voices and equal screen time, so Blanche was given far more to do than just fall in bed with random men."

Consequently, *The Golden Girls* was never supposed to be the smash hit it was; not to take anything from any of the actresses—Arthur, McClanahan, White, or Estelle Getty. All of them had stellar acting careers and had accomplished much before *The Golden Girls* was even written. But producing and putting a show on a major network about four aged

women who live together in a house in Miami? It could have been the most tepid, short-lived comedy in television history! Instead, it helped to redefine television and make us look at the elderly in a different light.

McClanahan, who had been married six times, had undergone treatment for breast cancer in 1997; in 2009, she had heart bypass surgery. The last surviving cast member of *The Golden Girls* is White. Arthur died from cancer in 2009, and Getty of natural causes in 2008.

Of her death, White said in a statement, *"Rue was a close and dear friend. I treasured our relationship. It hurts more than I even thought it would, if that's even possible."*

Here's to Rue McClanahan a.k.a. Blanche Deveraux...long live the prowl of the cougar!

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...a jazzy place

PLATINUM SPONSORSHIP

The Southside Golf Classic



SCHEDULE

8:00AM

Registration
Driving Range Opens

8:30AM

Putting Contest
Chipping Contest

9:00AM

Shotgun Start
Four Person Scramble

2:30PM

(brooklyn jazz café)
Banquet Reception
Awards
Prize Drawings

Friday, June 25th 2010

Cedar Crest Golf Course
1800 Southerland Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75203



SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

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(includes entry for 4 teams)

\$5,000 Gold Sponsor
(includes entry for 2 teams)

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(includes entry for 1 team)

\$1,500 Lunch Sponsor

\$1,000 Beverage Cart Sponsor

\$1,000 Closest to Pin Sponsor
(two holes)

\$1,000 Longest Drive Sponsor
(two holes)

\$500 Hole Sponsor
(18 holes available)

Off the Bone Barbeque

This year's Southside Golf Classic is presented by **brooklyn jazz café** and **Dallas Mavericks'** President and **Texas Legends'** owner **Donnie Nelson**. In this brochure, you'll find sponsorship opportunities, the schedule for the event, and a registration form. This should prove to be an exciting and eventful day for all involved. Proceeds from this tournament will benefit **Ronald McDonald House**, **A Small Miracle Foundation**, and **Genesis Women's Shelter**.

Ronald McDonald House allows families to access specialized medical treatment by providing a place to stay at little or sometimes no cost; *A Small Miracle Foundation* provides childcare services for families in the Dallas-Fort Worth area battling cancer; *Genesis Women's Shelter* provides quality safety and shelter to battered women and helps those in need transition to a more stable way of life.

Please consider joining us help those less fortunate and disadvantaged.
For additional information, e-mail inquiries to:
manager@brooklynjazzcafe.com