

FIRST AND FOREMOST

a rundown of harmless news

TELEVISION TONIGHT

“Atlantis SquarePantis” (8 p.m. Nickelodeon). Spongebob finds David Bowie and where the lost city of Atlantis has been hiding all these years.

“Heroes” (9 p.m. NBC). The story goes back four months to explain the mess we’ve been watching this entire season.

GEORGIA NATIVE TALKS ON HIS VOICE WORK, SOUTHERN ROOTS

LOS ANGELES — Nearing the end of the interview — with some last-minute fact-checking points to go through — Gary Anthony Williams wants to set the record straight.

“Oh, and by the way, I am not Dick Anthony Williams’ son,” he says, referring to the “Black Picture Show” star. “Could you clear that up for me on the Internet?”

He’s talking about his profile on a popular online database, which notes other things he’d like corrected: His mother is not the late actress Gloria Edwards — his mom still lives in Fayetteville, where he was raised — and his birthday is in March, not April.

“At one point, I was 10 years younger than I am,” Williams says. “A friend called me, angry, ‘I’m changing my age on my resume if you can pretend that you’re 30!’”

Sitting in a lobby of Salami Studios in North Hollywood, the 41-year-old improv actor is good-humored and more soft-spoken than the razor-tongued Uncle Ruckus he voices on “The Boondocks,” Aaron McGruder’s adaptation of his edgy comic strip set in the suburbs. It airs Mondays (11:30 p.m.) on Cartoon Network’s late-night Adult Swim lineup.

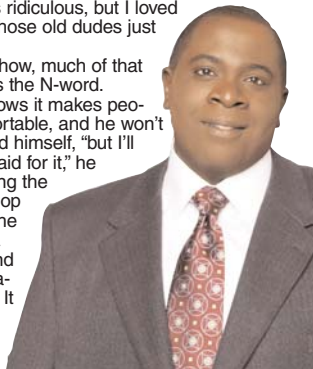
Williams is chatty as he waits for his turn in the recording booth.

“Any time I hear big stars talk about how tough voiceover is, I want to punch them in the throat,” he says, with a hint of Ruckus. Then enthusiastically: “It’s one of the easiest jobs in acting. You just stand behind the microphone and read what’s on the page and you bring that to life.”

Once in the booth, Williams makes it look effortless. Without missing a beat — well, almost — he runs through his lines for Uncle Ruckus, the bitter old black man who hates black people. For Williams, he draws from familiar territory.

“I just pull from all the people that used to stop by and talk to my daddy when I was little,” Williams says of his “deep South” Georgian roots. “Some of those guys, the stuff coming out of their mouths was ridiculous, but I loved to listen to those old dudes just talk crap.”

On the show, much of that talk includes the N-word. Williams knows it makes people uncomfortable, and he won’t use the word himself, “but I’ll gladly get paid for it,” he laughs, noting the series’ hip-hop leanings. “The show won a Peabody, and there’s a reason for that. It does have something to say.”



KEYS CLOSE TO A CLASSIC WITH LATEST ALBUM, ‘AS I AM’

In the six years since she made her recording debut, Alicia Keys has sold millions of records, won an armful of Grammys and racked up a gaggle of hits. Yet for all of her accomplishments, Keys has yet to deliver the one thing that matters most — a truly great album.

True, her debut, 2001’s “Songs in A Minor,” and her sophomore album, 2003’s “The Diary of Alicia Keys,” contained breathtakingly beautiful songs like “You Don’t Know My Name” and “Fallin’” that demonstrated why Keys is among the most heralded talents of her generation. But it always seemed as if she put all of her efforts in those truly amazing songs, and the rest of her music was decidedly average in comparison.

Now back with her third studio album, “As I Am,” Keys still hasn’t produced a classic — but oh, she’s so tantalizingly close. Once again, the singer-songwriter comes up with some brilliant music. But what’s more important is that even the songs that fail to live up to that high standard are, for the most part, pretty memorable on their own, resulting in a near-great, cohesive record.

Working once again with partner Kerry Krucial, along with other collaborators like producer-songwriters Linda Perry and John Mayer, the songs on “As I Am” home in on Keys’ specialty — magical love ballads and soulful songs that burn slow but retain their fire throughout. One song that’s an example of the latter: the mournful, yet ultimately hopeful “Lesson Learned,” about picking up the pieces after heartbreak. You can hear the ache in her stirring voice as she sings: “I was burned, but I call it a lesson learned.”

On the passionate, sexy “Wreckless Love,” one of the CD’s best tracks, she gives perhaps her best vocal performance, alternating between a sexy near-whisper to full-out tempestuous growl as the horns and drums reach a crescendo in the background.



Feathered invasion

Local artists work on hatching lil’ chickens in honor of Marietta’s favorite mascot

“It’s the whole city’s project. It’s not just for one, it’s for everyone.”

— Catherine Castaldo, Lil’ Chickens of Marietta committee co-chairwoman

By Amanda Crissup
Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

MARIETTA — Little by little, the Lil’ Chickens of Marietta are making their way toward the city.

Of the 35 fiberglass statues modeled after the city’s iconic landmark, one is nearing completion, five are in various stages of undress with their artists, and 24 more still need sponsors.

Organized by the Junior League of Marietta, the public art project aims to bring a little bit of whimsy to the city while supporting local charities.

“It’s the whole city’s project. It’s not just for one, it’s for everyone,” said Catherine Castaldo, Lil’ Chickens committee co-chairwoman.

Marilyn Rose, retired art professor and Marietta resident, is mother hen to the chicken closest to being finished. Sponsored by the Friends of the Marietta Museum of History, Mrs. Rose’s chicken depicts the museum’s

On the Web

Lil’ Chickens of Marietta
www.lilchickensofmarietta.com

mousy mascots, Murray and Etta, frolicking across the fiberglass fowl.

At a glance, it looks complete but Mrs. Rose said there’s still some work to be done. She wants to add some other critters to the scene, making her work a bit of an artistic scavenger hunt.

“I think it’s fun for the kids to find things,” she said.

Meanwhile, in Sandy Springs, another chicken is just waiting to hatch in Aaron Harris’ garage. An attorney by day with Brock, Clay, Rodgers and Calhoun of Marietta, Harris also received his bachelor’s degree in painting and advertising from the University of Georgia.

“I’ve always been the sort of person who tries to do more than one thing at a time,” Harris said. “It keeps me balanced.”

His chicken, sponsored by the law firm, will feature Latin law phrases such as “Dura lex, sed lex” meaning the law is hard but it is the law; and “Bona ficalia” or public property.

While the Lil’ chickens are intended to be public property, some have special meanings to their sponsors or the artists. For Marietta native Claire Dunaway, the chicken she designed to honor the Strand is a tribute to the community’s efforts to restore the old movie house.

Likewise, United Community Bank’s chosen chicken, Melissa B. Snyder’s “Flew the Coop,” is in line with their commitment to support the Aviation Museum.

“It was so appropriate for the aviation museum and it had our bank colors. It was just perfect,” said Toni Brewton, the bank’s marketing manager.

Originally scheduled to debut this summer, the Lil’ chickens are scheduled to hatch in the spring, popping up all over the city. Natalie Rutledge said the initial delay was caused by not having enough sponsors.

“In the beginning it was the timing. The 2007 budget had already been created,” said Natalie Rutledge, treasurer of the Junior League.

The Junior League of Marietta isn’t counting its chickens before they hatch, but they do want to give as many Lil’ chickens as possible their day in the sun.

Mayor Bill Dunaway agreed. “Once it’s done and everyone sees the chickens, everyone will be really proud of it,” he said. “It’s an amazing sample of artists.”

Businesses, individuals or groups can sponsor a statue in three brackets: \$3,000; \$7,000 and \$10,000. A portion of the proceeds benefits the charity of the beneficiary’s choice.

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Artist Marilyn Rose of Marietta shows her painted chicken, left and above, which features the Marietta Museum of History’s mascot mice, Murray and Etta. Her work is part of the Lil’ Chickens of Marietta art project, in support of local charities.

Staff photos by
Thinh D. Nguyen

