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RAW DEAL FOR  
ABORIGINAL ACTORS...**BLACK  
POWER  
UPRISING!**

BY COLIN TALBOT

**A**RTHUR UPFIELD could not have foreseen that the creation of his part-Aboriginal outback sleuth, Napoleon (Bony) Bonaparte in the late 1920s would lead to an Aboriginal uprising.

But the war drums are beating, and Smoke Signals will be talking, and Fauna Productions had better barricade its offices if the rest of the Aboriginal community share the feelings of Black Power advocate Bob Maza, who said in a moment of anger he would like to "lay them (Fauna) flat".

Bob is president of the Victorian Aborigines Advancement League. And as he says in the journal of the League, *Smoke Signals*, he is proud to be a "black Australian".

Doubtless *Smoke Signals* will soon burn with Bob's words on the Bony affair.

Bony became a literary legend through Upfield's novels. His exploits, ranging through 26 books, were followed by readers throughout Australia and the rest of the world.

Now, six years after Upfield's death, Bony will come to the screen in a television series produced by Fauna Productions.

Many times during Upfield's life, offers came from Hollywood and Australian producers to film Bony's sleuthing.

But unlike Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlowe, Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, Micky Spillane's Mike Hammer, or Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason, Arthur Upfield's Napoleon Bonaparte never quite made it.

● **LEFT: Aboriginal actor Bob Maza, a member of the *Bellbird* cast and a fighter for Aborigines' rights.**

And the reason for anger from the Aboriginal community, instead of joy, that an important part of their culture is to be brought to the public?

The part of Bony will not be played by an Aboriginal. Bony will be played by a "gubba"—a white man.

The reason? Fauna Productions' executive Mr. John McCallum says that Bony, being part-Aboriginal, looks more European than Aboriginal.

Bob Maza is himself an actor. And Bob looked set to go on the warpath when he heard that Fauna Productions was likely to cast a white man in the part of Bony.

Bob, who plays Aboriginal lawyer Gerry Walters in *Bellbird*, has a reputation for being outspoken—and his words definitely helped him retain that image.

"Those bastards! Just get me a plane ticket to Sydney and I'll go up there and lay them all flat." Bob seemed angry enough to mean every word of that statement.

And if Bob did decide to become militant, doubtless his many supporters, both white and black, would back him to the hilt.

But Bob soon regained his cool. In a calmer mood he attacked (verbally) Fauna's John McCallum.

"John McCallum's position as a 'top executive' of Fauna Productions is questionable, as he seems to be a person who is guided by pre-conceived ideas, and I believe he hasn't the capacity for the position if he holds such views," said Bob.

"I believe that anyone in his position should be as factual as possible in making selections.

"He's proved my point with his own words, 'We haven't tested any Aboriginal actors because Napoleon Bonaparte is a half-caste who

mean by suitable.

"There are a number of Aboriginal actors in Australia well qualified for the role—John Newfong, Bob Maza, Harry Williams and Steve Lampton, for example.

"John Newfong (a Sydney actor) would be ideal for the role."