Roundtree, Richard (1937-) Encyclopedia Article

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Born July 9, 1937 in New Rochelle, New York, ex-model Richard Roundtree established himself as one of Hollywood's first black action heroes in only his second feature film, *Shaft* (1971). Expertly directed by Gordon Parks, and with an Oscar-nominated soundtrack by Isaac Hayes, *Shaft* (based on a novel by Ernest Tidyman) is probably the best representative of the genre of low-budget American movies known as "blaxploitation." Roundtree stars as a streetwise private eye who sets out to find the missing daughter of a Harlem ganglord. Two sequels, *Shaft's Big Score* (1972) and *Shaft in Africa* (1973), as well as a short-lived network television show, soon followed. Over the years Roundtree has established himself as a popular character actor. His work numbers over 60 movies and television miniseries, not to mention an album, *The Man Called Shaft.* Films include *Q-The Winged Serpent* (1982), *Seven* (1995), and *Original Gangstas* (1996).

A sign off U.S. 285, north of Roswell, New Mexico, points west to the alleged 1947 crash site of a flying saucer.

Further Reading:

James, Darius. *That's Blaxploitation!: Roots of the Baadasssss 'Tude (Rated X by an All-Whyte Jury).* New York, St. Martin's Grif-fin, 1995.

Tidyman, Ernest. *Shaft.* New York, Macmillan, 1970.