

THE OPEN RANGE



THE BRONZE BUCKAROO'S 90TH BIRTHDAY BASH

Last September, in celebration of Herb Jeffries' 90th birthday, friends and fans gathered at the Iverson Movie Ranch in Topanga Canyon, California, to honor the black singing cowboy who starred in five Westerns in the late 1930s. "I felt that dark-skinned children could identify with me and, in the *Bronze Buckaroo*, they could have a hero," Jeffries says. "Many people don't realize that in the Old West, one out of every three cowboys was a black."

After retiring from acting, Jeffries toured with The Duke Ellington Orchestra and obtained musical renown for his song recordings of "Flamingo," which have sold over 14 million copies. The two-day birthday celebration was coordinated with the Iverson Movie Ranch's annual Wild, Wild West Days, and proceeds from admission and raffles went to the Happy Trails Children's Foundation and the Chatsworth Land Preservation Association. The event highlight was Jeffries' performance of "I'm A Happy Cowboy," with musical accompaniment by the Horse Soldiers. Jeffries' most recent CD, *The Duke and I*, constitutes a reunion of Herb Jeffries and the music of Duke Ellington on the 100th birthday of the world-famous composer and band leader.

FYI: herbjeffries.com.

—Chelley Kitzmiller

Cowboys & Indians
March 2002