

# **Something New**

**A Focus Features Release**

**Production Notes**

# Something New

## Synopsis

A romantic comedy about finding love where it's least expected, **Something New** marks the feature directorial debut of Sanaa Hamri.

If love is an adventure, it's one yet to be embarked upon by Kenya Denise McQueen (Sanaa Lathan). A beautiful L.A. career woman, Kenya works as senior manager at a prestigious accounting firm, and is on the verge of making partner. But she has yet to find her own partner and a fulfilling personal life. It's not that she's stopped looking; her (mental) checklist is at the ready. After another Valentine's Day spent working late, Kenya agrees to a blind date with Brian Kelly (Simon Baker), a sexy and free-spirited landscape architect who turns out to be not exactly what she'd pictured for herself. Then again, she *does* need the yard of her new house fixed up...

Her girlfriends Cheryl, Suzzette, and Nedra (Wendy Raquel Robinson, Golden Brooks, Taraji P. Henson) are there for her with advice, while Cheryl's new beau Walter (Mike Epps) shares a male perspective with Brian. Kenya's socially prominent parents Joyce and Edmond (Alfre Woodard, Earl Billings) and womanizing younger brother Nelson (Donald Faison) also voice their own opinions. But it's when her perfect match, Mark (Blair Underwood), enters the picture that Kenya is truly thrown into confusion. Ultimately, Kenya has to decide for herself and follow her heart – no matter where it takes her.

A Focus Features presentation of a Stephanie Allain production. **Something New**. Sanaa Lathan, Simon Baker, Mike Epps, Donald Faison, Blair Underwood, Wendy Raquel Robinson, and Alfre Woodard. Casting by Jeanne McCarthy, CSA. Music Supervisors, Spring Aspers, Paul Stewart. Music by Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman. Costume Designer, Hope Hanafin. Editor, Melissa Kent. Production Designer, Mayne Berke. Director of Photography, Shane Hurlbut. Executive Producers, Preston Holmes, Joe Pichirallo. Produced by Stephanie Allain. Written by Kriss Turner. Directed by Sanaa Hamri. A Focus Features Release.

# Something New

## About the Production

### *“Love is an adventure”*

**Something New** is a modern romance told with humor, and is the rare film directed, written, and produced by women of color. However, the filmmakers’ inspiration for their tale came from a Detroit Free Press story that was neither romantic nor funny.

Producer Stephanie Allain explains, “The article identified 42.4 percent as the percentage of black women who have never been married. Percentages aside, I saw this reflected not just in the lives of my black girlfriends but with other professional women I knew.”

Screenwriter Kriss Turner remembers, “I’d gotten the initial article from a friend of mine, and those numbers were very scary. I know a lot of fabulous, sharp, professional women that are still single, and I thought, ‘This is a movie.’”

Allain continues, “Kriss wrote about what I felt was universal for working women who are looking for love. As fantastic as their professional lives might be, they also want love in their personal lives. **Something New** looks at this problem through the eyes of a particular woman, Kenya Denise McQueen, who is an executive needing to expand her horizons in order to find love.”

Turner adds, “When you get to your late 30s and you’re still single, the thing that comes up – especially among black women professionals – is, are you going to go outside your race? If you want to find love and get married, you are probably going to have to open it up and think outside the box.

“I pitched it to a few people, and they felt, ‘Black girl, white guy, big deal.’ But it is still a big deal; even in 2006, it’s still a little dicey. I wanted to open more dialogues, and with comedy you can be more honest. I wrote it on spec and my agent got it to Stephanie. While she and I were working on the script, Newsweek put out a cover story about black women which confirmed what we already knew; namely, that professional women are tired of being alone and are open to dating and marrying outside their race.”

As the producer and screenwriter worked on the script, they also found that they were on the same page with respect to who should star and who could direct. Turner states, “Stephanie always wanted a female director to make this movie. From when I wrote it, Sanaa Lathan was the only person I ever had in mind to star. I saw her face while I was writing it; there was no one else. She has such sophistication, she is a real woman, and she’s a wonderful actress.”

“Sanaa Lathan was always, from the beginning, the top choice for the movie,” confirms Allain. “When Sanaa Hamri read the script, she really related to it, and we connected as soon as we met.”

Hamri, a top director and editor of music videos, had been looking to make the transition to feature films. But, as she notes, “I didn’t want to do anything too flashy or like a music video. I wanted to direct a project that dealt with character and humanness. I found that in this script. **Something New** talks about humanity and about bringing people together, despite prejudices; that has always been a theme in my work, so this movie seemed like a natural transition.”

Allain adds, “Sanaa, who is from Morocco, is a very visual director; her videos are lush and romantic.”

Turner remembers, “The three of us had dinner together, and we all agreed that the movie should look rich and beautiful. I wrote it about affluent black people; watching the movie, people are going to be saying, ‘This is refreshing.’ As a director, Sanaa has such attention to detail, that **Something New** not only has plenty of humor but is appealing to the eye.”

Hamri clarifies, “Visually, I wanted a movie that had a lot of texture and strength in terms of the emotions and characters. While it is a romantic comedy, I never intended to shoot it with that certain type of lighting and look that people tend to use.

“What I am trying to show is that we are all a lot more similar than we think. For example, Kenya’s struggle as a working woman is not only because she’s black; it’s also because she’s female. I think women of every culture will identify with her. **Something New** is about following your heart and your dream.”

Allain comments, “When love comes to you, you have to recognize that it is love. By understanding, or emphasizing, or listening, a lot of static can be tuned out and love can bloom. Finding it in unusual places will hopefully expand people’s minds and break down some of the prejudices that are completely fabricated.”

Turner says, “If love is what you really want, then color really can’t make any difference. Be open to what the universe may present to you.”

### *“Make things bloom”*

Sanaa Lathan was the sole choice for the lead role of Kenya Denise McQueen in **Something New**. The actress remarks, “Good scripts don’t come along too often, so they are immediately recognizable when you do get one. One way I can tell if a script is good is if I can read it in one sitting, if it’s a page-turner. That was the case with **Something New**, which I found had a lot of truth in it – a lot of inside info that white women will hear for the first time, but about which black women will know because they’ve been there. I have; my girlfriends have.

“**Something New** deals with race, but also how people from different classes can fall in love. Kenya is a great character; she grows throughout the script. I think she’s an optimist, but she has this list of all the characteristics that she would need to have for her mate. Your heart is going to fall in love with who it’s going to fall in love with, and it’s not necessarily what’s on paper.

Lathan continues, "When Kenya agrees to a blind date with Brian, she automatically assumes that it's a black guy, because it's just not even in her mind that she would be set up with a white guy. When she goes into the Magic Johnson Starbucks and there's this blond-haired, blue-eyed guy, she doesn't even see him. As things progress between them, there's something in his soul that I think Kenya connects to, something that makes her feel more alive."

The actress was also encouraged to take the lead role in the film because, she marvels, "Sanaa Hamri and I both have the same name. Never in my life have I met somebody with the name Sanaa – and, spelled the same way. And never before have I been in a movie with strong, smart black women at the helm.

"When you work with a first-time film director, you never know what to expect. Sure, Sanaa's video reel was awesome, but it's her theater background that really counts when a director has to talk to you in acting terms. I'm in almost every scene of **Something New**, and Sanaa kept it fun and energetic; she's very specific about what she wants, which is great."

Stephanie Allain elaborates, "We keep saying 'first-time director,' but Sanaa has directed so many music videos with complicated set-ups that she knows a lot about what she wants and how to get it. That's the most important thing for a film director to have."

Beginning in late 2004, a creative team was convened to staff Hamri's feature directorial debut. "I'm a collaborator," she notes. "I'm not a dictator on the set. It's about having fun – and making the project right."

Production designer Mayne Berke comments, "Coming from the music video world, where prep time is very limited, Sanaa is used to having to make decisions quickly and with conviction. Whenever I would show her something, she didn't hesitate for a second in telling me what she liked or didn't like. Another asset was her editorial experience; she knows what she needs, or will need."

Costume designer Hope Hanafin says, "When I read the screenplay, I loved it, because it shows that you can't script your life before you're in it. But it was meeting Sanaa Hamri and her energy and warmth that really engaged me. I've done about 35 movies, and I've never met a director like her. I looked at her videos and saw that she had a real romantic sense about her, and although **Something New** is a contemporary film, the screenplay reminded me of wonderful 1950s romances; for instance, the dilemma of career vs. man in Doris Day and Katharine Hepburn films."

Cinematographer Shane Hurlbut found the director to be "a breath of fresh air. Sanaa and I strove to capture these two people, Kenya and Brian, falling in love in a way that I feel is different. A you-are-there feel, very intimate, and with a lot of natural light."

Casting the second half of the film's romantic couple required an actor who would match up well on-screen with the leading lady. Allain notes, "Brian slowly but confidently coaxes Kenya out of her ambivalence. He also learns to understand her world better.

"We auditioned actors, and when Simon Baker read with Sanaa Lathan, the chemistry was evident. He could be funny, but also deep and serious."

Hamri says, "We needed to find a male lead who could add things to the character. When Simon performs, you're like, 'Oh yeah...!' I mean, every woman who watches this will want to be with him – and I think men will give him his props as well."

Baker offers, "Being surrounded by strong and nurturing black women on this movie was a privilege and a pleasure for me. I'm Australian, so I didn't grow up with African-American culture. I learned a lot on this film."

"I like love stories; I don't think there's enough of them made. What I found interesting about **Something New** was that these two characters were in their 30s and so there's a little more hesitancy. They're now a little more afraid to just go with their hearts. To Brian, it's not about race or color, it's just about men and women. He has a quiet confidence, and with him she starts to be more and more alive and in the moment."

The screenplay called for a variety of friends and family members to orbit the two leads. As Baker remarks, "We have characters that are larger-than-life, because there are people in everyone's life who are larger-than-life. They spice things up at certain times throughout the film."

"Casting is so important," emphasizes Allain. "When you have the right people in the right roles, the movie takes on its own life force. I think the cast we have in **Something New** responded to the material and responded to Sanaa as director."

Kriss Turner notes that Kenya's three closest girlfriends "all have her back. I think we all have that support network which is so important to us – especially when we're not feeling so sure about something or someone."

The talented trio of Golden Brooks, Taraji P. Henson, and Wendy Raquel Robinson were cast as Kenya's girlfriends, who exhibit varying degrees of open-mindedness during the course of the film.

Brooks says, "I gravitated towards this particular movie because it has a fresh take on interracial dating. For a black woman, there are dynamics like, do you have to overcompensate by being 'more black?' If you wear a weave, does that mean you're 'selling out?' This movie touches on those things. At heart, it's Kenya's coming-of-age story. To have so many women on this project made it stronger and empowering."

"My character, Suzzette, is a woman who is onto a new thing every month; 'Oh, we've got to eat for our blood type.' She keeps her girlfriends up-to-date with what's going on. She wants Kenya to be happy and not end up alone, so she challenges her to stop limiting herself."

Henson remarks, "In America, we've made leaps and bounds with race issues, but I think we still have a ways to go. Go outside your zip code, and see how people are living. So this script interested me right away. Also, anytime Stephanie Allain calls me, I'm there, and I'd always wanted to work with Sanaa Lathan. Sometimes among women, because the roles are so few and far between, it can become a little catty. Not with this group; every day, it was a blessing to come to work because it was drama-free."

"Nedra's point of view on Kenya's relationship with Brian is, 'Girl, what are you doing? Keep it real; you need a brother.' But Nedra remains without a man, so she lives vicariously through Kenya and looks up to her."

Meanwhile, girlfriend Cheryl (played by Robinson) also embarks on a relationship that takes her into new territory. Allain explains, "Our theme of love coming in all packages also applies to Cheryl's story. She meets a great guy, Walter [played by Mike Epps], who happens to be more blue-collar than she is. When she first meets him, he's got an apron on, and she thinks, 'Oh, that's not really the guy I'm looking for.' But he wins her over with his personality and caring."

Robinson says, "Cheryl is a successful and driven judge who has gotten a little bitter with the dating game. When she meets Walter, the chemistry is there, so she takes a risk and steps outside the box – and empathizes with what Kenya goes through with Brian."

"**Something New** tells a story that needs to be told, and is also an excellent date movie. There is a shortage of available men in Los Angeles; my own girlfriends lament the drama that goes with dating. If the heart's not there, you can't make a situation happen. But you also can't judge a book by its cover, since you never know what's inside a man just based on his exterior."

Mike Epps offers, "I think Cheryl likes Walter because he's a real guy. He's got a sense of humor. As a chef, he's not making the big money, but he does well enough for her to enjoy him and he treats her well."

Another male character in the film's mix is Mark, a successful tax attorney who emerges as a rival suitor for Kenya. Allain says, "Blair Underwood was the only actor we considered for this role of a gorgeous professional black man, because Blair really is the prototypical ideal black man. We just went right to him."

Underwood recalls, "I had the great fortune of working with Sanaa Hamri on a music video. She tried to find the characters within those couple of minutes, and I thought she was great. I told her, 'Whenever you do your first movie, I'd love to be a part of it.' Also, I've respected Sanaa Lathan's work for a long time, and we'd been trying to find a project to work together on. All this came together with a very interesting script."

"Mark has everything in place in his life, and he's looking for that right lady. Before I met my wife, I remember thinking, 'Am I ever going to find that right person?' **Something New** is about how you can't determine, define, or pinpoint who you're going to fall in love with. Can you throw your list out the window, throw caution to the wind, and follow your heart? Do you follow your heart or do you follow society? Not everybody's okay with going against Mommy and Daddy's wishes, or brothers' and sisters' wishes."

To play the family members whose wishes Kenya takes into account, Hamri had key criteria. She explains, "In some movies, you see these castings and they do not at all look like they're related..."

On the latter count, four-time Emmy Award winner Alfre Woodard was perhaps the clearest choice to play Kenya's mother Joyce, since, as Woodard reminds, "I've played Sanaa Lathan's mom

before [six years prior]. Even before that, I was a big advocate of hers. I think she is an actor with the goods.”

Returning the compliment, Lathan states, “Alfre is one of my heroes. When I found out she was interested in doing the movie, I felt so lucky and thrilled.”

Woodard notes, “You very seldom see a picture where you watch the process of falling in love. Interestingly enough, one such film was the other one Sanaa and I did together, Gina Prince-Bythewood’s *Love and Basketball*. And we’re long overdue for an interracial romance on film.

“My character, Joyce, insists upon certain standards for her children and her husband. Kenya is sometimes impatient with her mother; Joyce can only see as far as she is developed, but she is still a loving person. I thought that was something I could bring to the role that might get overlooked. Joyce reacts to Brian in terms of, not just because this man is white; she takes into account ‘Where is he from, who are his parents, what does he do, how does he speak...’”

Kenya’s brother Nelson, played by *Scrubs* star Donald Faison, reacts in blunter terms. Turner laughs, “That was such an easy character for me to write, because I know that guy many times over.”

Faison states, “Nelson represents black males in America who, when they see a white man dating a black female, they get upset. Nelson first off doesn’t like the fact that his sister would date a gardener, and second of all a white gardener. He has preconceptions he needs to let go of. I think this movie says a lot about relationships. I believe that it’s very important when you fall in love with somebody, you fall in love with them from your heart and not from what-will-everybody-else-think.

“I’ve been in love with Sanaa Lathan for ages – and now I get to play her brother...so I’ve officially been put into the ‘friend’ zone...”

Rounding out the cast, and heading up the movie’s McQueen family, is Earl Billings as Dr. Edmond McQueen, head of neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Hospital. “Modern-day romantic comedies don’t come along for me very often,” the actor acknowledges. “I’m a sucker for them, ever since the days of Jack Lemmon and Rock Hudson and those guys. Alfre Woodard has been a friend of mine for a long time, and when I work with her, it’s like walking off a cliff holding her hand and knowing that you will float. I’ve known Sanaa Lathan’s father since long before she was born; I respect her work, and I respect her as a human being.

“I have a daughter and, once you have a daughter, you have an understanding of love on such a deep level that you can’t even explain it. If you think you know anything about anybody, you don’t until you have a daughter.”

The veteran actor adds, “Edmond is an intelligent man with a common base. Usually when actors play doctors or professionals, they make the mistake of putting on these phony airs of sophistication. I knew Edmond wouldn’t have those. He’s helping Kenya finding her place in the world; as the firstborn, she’s already followed his example by getting into the professional world and being very successful in it. But, as my own wife used to say, until you find out who you are, the person you need will not come into your life.”

For Kenya, that person might be the man arriving at 7:30 A.M. each day to work on her property. Lathan says, "You know, Brian has a line that I think is so sexy – 'I take hard earth and make things bloom.' That's basically what happens with Kenya. He opens her up, and she discovers who she is."

Baker adds, "The fact that Brian is a landscape architect who nurtures plants informed my approach to the character and playing opposite Sanaa; nurturing little bit by little bit, and being patient. Sanaa Hamri has a very cinematic eye, and so the evolution of our relationship meshes nicely with the blossoming and blooming of Kenya's garden."

Hamri elaborates, "The garden represents Kenya's undernourished soul. As the movie starts, we see that the garden is neglected and that Kenya has also neglected her emotions as a woman. She's stuck in a box in the corporate world – which is not terrible, but you have to have a balance in life. Eventually, she blooms and becomes the person that she truly should be, and the garden itself transforms into where she's at emotionally."

The director had to oversee not only Kenya's emotional transformation but also the garden's physical one. The latter would be largely in the hands – literally – of the film crew.

Production designer Berke notes, "The first scene in the movie is a dream, while the last scene in the movie is reality. The screenplay specified Gerber daisies in both; those happen to be one of the few flowers that are available in literally thousands of colors, and that's why it's written that way. Kenya's world starts out with a tasteful but tight color palette – based in beige – and the more Brian is in her life and her world, color starts to be interjected. The first color we introduce is orange. Then we introduce greens, which come when Brian starts working on her garden. By the end of the movie, it's a complete rainbow of colors."

Cinematographer Hurlbut clarifies, "The garden has three phases; brown, green, and then an explosion of color. The green is 'greener than green' as Brian starts to breathe life into Kenya's world."

Berke continues, "We annotated, in the script, the distinct phases. The screenplay pretty much dictated it; it's not often that I read a script where what goes on visually helps reinforce a character's arc. In the beginning of the movie, there is almost no delineation between Kenya's life at work and her life at home; she's working weekends at her house. So the office is in the same palette as her home; both are beige, as the screenwriter specified. The biggest difference was between the first and second phases – which we had only three days to do; we had as many people as we could fit into the space working for three days straight."

Turner notes, "It's just how I envisioned it when writing the script; things become beautiful when another person is in your life, and it becomes more about colors."

Berke adds, "Sanaa Hamri told me that she definitely saw it as more of a loose country garden than a more angular and structured one, and that she wanted some Moroccan influence in the garden. Believe it or not, a lot of the foliage and plant life that grows in Southern California is very similar to Morocco."

"We also put greensman Michael McCombe – who is a genius – together with Simon Baker, so Simon could ask questions. Simon already had a pretty good working knowledge from his own home. For Brian's apartment, there's lots of plant life and things that are growing and germinating."

Hope Hanafin confirms, "I've also [costume-] designed each scene in a color palette, and Kenya herself moves from more confining and monochromatic clothing into an awakening not only of color but also of sensuousness."

"Brian wears clothing that is environmentally sound and also virile and sexy. Edmond always has some warmth in his colors, something reminiscent of Africa – Kenya, where he spent time and where he named his daughter. Joyce is always in subtle neutrals. Kenya's girlfriends look fabulous – but real, wearing clothes that they could afford from places they would shop in."

The crew also worked extensively on the cotillion sequence, which called for dozens of extras. Turner, who appears as an extra in the sequence, laughs, "It's wonderful – I was at my computer by myself writing this, and months later I come to the set and it's like, oh, 300 people..."

Allain marvels, "It feels to me like something out of *The Age of Innocence* or *The Godfather*. A big ballroom, beautiful women all dressed in white dancing to a waltz – it's a part of black society that we have never seen on film."

"I actually did not know that there was an all-African-American cotillion," admits Hamri. "It adheres to the European form, in terms of how the women are presented – in a mold of something that they may not necessarily wish to be."

Berke reports, "The cotillion in Los Angeles, which I contacted, is held every single year. It's a high-end, very formal event. For example, there are candelabras on the tables, so we found a fantastic style of those for our sequence. There's a whole set of rules and regulations."

Costume designer Hanafin clarifies, "At the actual cotillion, debutantes can wear any pure white – not off-white – dress as long as it has, among other rules, two-inch straps, two-inch heels, and is two inches off the ground. We exaggerated slightly, in that we did 16 women in identical dresses, with ten yards of fabric in each skirt. These girls are tied up – with a bow in the back – like they're being presented as packages to the world, which is not necessarily a relaxed state to be in."

Despite – or perhaps because of – its being the biggest sequence in the film, Hurlbut cites it as "one of my favorite things to shoot. I loved our location; the Biltmore Hotel is a Los Angeles landmark that not a lot of people ever see."

The Biltmore was not the only relatively unsung Los Angeles location that **Something New** showcases. Allain notes, "We set out to make an L.A. movie in upscale and cultural parts of L.A. that you haven't seen before. We filmed in Baldwin Hills, View Park [for Kenya's home], and at Simply Wholesome [for the supermarket sequence] and of course the Magic Johnson Starbucks. Kenya's office is in Westwood. Brian lives in Venice."

Hamri affirms, "Los Angeles is a great presence in the movie, and we're showing it in a different way. In terms of African-American culture in L.A., gangs and east L.A. are not the whole story. There are these amazing neighborhoods, and I felt it was important that people see them onscreen. Real places, represented as is – there's no embellishment – in our L.A. story."

Hurlbut admits, "I knew of Baldwin Hills and View Park, but even living in L.A. for 16-17 years, I had never driven there and seen how spectacular they are. In View Park, it was cool to design crane shots for when Kenya comes out of her house for her morning walk and we see all of downtown behind her. And Crenshaw Street, which I did know, has so much flavor; it's always fun to shoot."

### *"Let go, let flow"*

"**Something New** is a movie for the new millennium," says Stephanie Allain. "If this picture had been made 20 years ago, it would have highlighted the things that keep people apart. In our movie, we're showing what brings them together. It's the first interracial love story of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a black woman and a white man."

"I think working women – whether black, white, Asian, or whatever – are going to find that this movie is saying to them, 'Don't give up on love or your career – go for both!' We deserve to have it all, and we can."

Simon Baker remarks that "power doesn't come from how much bacon you bring home or who you get to boss around at work. True power comes from how comfortable you are with yourself."

Kriss Turner says, "I still have my list; I still like a guy to be taller than me...But, waiting for the same guy that's in your head – just know that you might not get that. Basically, we've got to get out of our heads and let our hearts take over. I think **Something New** will speak to everyone, and I hope dialogues and discussions follow."

Sanaa Lathan adds, "The ultimate lesson in **Something New** is to follow your heart – and don't worry about what other people think."

Sanaa Hamri says, "I believe the media is so behind the truth of what humans are going through. The fact of the matter is, you should be able to be with whomever you want and not have embarrassment about that. Melanin content shouldn't dictate how you should act towards a person, but it's kind of conditioned. I come from both races, and I feel that this enables me to see the world as a whole and not fragmented. This movie is about acceptance, bringing worlds and cultures together, and moving forward."

"But we're not preaching; it's a very entertaining picture. We have comedy, heart, and a universal theme, so I think audiences will get a lot out of it."

Alfre Woodard laughs, "It's a great date movie – everybody's going to get good kisses afterwards!"

# Something New

## About the Cast

### **SANAA LATHAN (Kenya Denise McQueen)**

Sanaa Lathan's already impressive career encompasses a series of successful motion pictures and stage appearances.

She won the NAACP Image Award, and was nominated for an IFP Independent Spirit Award, for her performance in Gina Prince-Bythewood's *Love and Basketball* (in which she first starred alongside Alfre Woodard of **Something New**). She reteamed with the filmmaker on the telefilm *Disappearing Acts*, in which she starred opposite Wesley Snipes.

Ms. Lathan earned NAACP Image Award nominations for her performances in Malcolm D. Lee's *The Best Man* and Rick Famuyiwa's *Brown Sugar*, and had earlier starred for the latter filmmaker in *The Wood*.

Her other movies include Paul W.S. Anderson's *Alien vs. Predator*; Carl Franklin's *Out of Time* (opposite Denzel Washington); Ted Demme's *Life* (with Eddie Murphy and Martin Lawrence); Stephen Norrington's *Blade* (her first film with Wesley Snipes); and Chi Moui Lo's independent feature *Catfish in Black Bean Sauce* (with Paul Winfield and Mary Alice). She was also a series regular on the television show *Lateline*, and starred as the younger incarnation of Della Reese's character in Arthur Allan Seidelman's telefilm *Miracle in the Woods*.

Ms. Lathan is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama. She has acted in numerous stage productions, including the (NYC) Public Theater productions of *Por'Knockers* and *A Movie Star Has to Star in Black and White* as well as the Public's Central Park staging of *Measure for Measure*; *The Vagina Monologues*; *To Take Arms* (for which she was an NAACP Theatrical Award nominee); and, most recently, in the Broadway revival of *A Raisin in the Sun*, with Phylicia Rashad, Audra McDonald, and Sean Combs (for which she earned a Tony Award nomination).

### **SIMON BAKER (Brian Kelly)**

Simon Baker played the title character on the popular dramatic television series *The Guardian* for three years, and earned a Golden Globe Award nomination for his portrayal.

The Australian-born actor has starred in a wide range of feature films, both independent and big-budget, in a variety of genres. His movies include Curtis Hanson's Academy Award-winning *L.A. Confidential* (with Kevin Spacey and Danny DeVito); Eric Bross' *Restaurant*; Sebastian Gutierrez' *Judas Kiss*; Stephen Grynberg's *Love from Ground Zero*; Ang Lee's *Ride with the Devil* (with Tobey Maguire); Adam Collis' *Sunset Strip*; Antony Hoffman's *Red Planet*; Charles Shyer's *The Affair of the Necklace* (opposite Hilary Swank); Alan Brown's *Book of Love*; Hideo Nakata's *The Ring Two* (opposite Naomi Watts); and, most recently, George A. Romero's *Land of the Dead*.

Mr. Baker next stars with Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway in David Frankel's *The Devil Wears Prada*.

### **MIKE EPPS (Walter)**

Mike Epps has, in the past six years, become an audience and industry favorite among comic actors.

The Indiana native has steadily climbed the stand-up comedy ranks, performing in sold-out theaters and clubs around the country. His 1995 appearances on *Def Comedy Jam* and the national tour of the same name brought him a large following. His show-stealing performance at the 1999 Laffapalooza festival in Atlanta occasioned a move to Los Angeles, where a successful appearance at L.A.'s Comedy Store caught the attention of Ice Cube. This in turn led to Mr. Epps being cast opposite the latter in Steve Carr's *Next Friday*, which more than doubled the gross of its predecessor film *Friday*. The duo soon reunited for two more movies, Kevin Bray's *All About the Benjamins* and Marcus Raboy's sequel *Friday After Next*. Mr. Epps also reteamed with director Steve Carr, providing a voiceover for *Dr. Dolittle 2*.

His additional feature credits include another sequel that outperformed its predecessor, Alexander Witt's *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*; Jesse Dylan's *How High*; Antoine Fuqua's *Bait*; Malcolm D. Lee's *Roll Bounce*; Jonathan Lynn's *The Fighting Temptations*; John Schultz' *The Honeyymooners*; and Kevin Rodney Sullivan's hit *Guess Who*.

### **DONALD FAISON (Nelson McQueen)**

Donald Faison is currently starring in his fifth season on NBC's Emmy Award-nominated series *Scrubs*. His portrayal of Dr. Chris Turk brought him the inaugural BET Comedy Award for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series.

He came to the attention of filmgoers in Amy Heckerling's comedy hit *Clueless*, and then again in Boaz Yakin's blockbuster drama *Remember the Titans* (opposite Denzel Washington). He reteamed with the latter director on *Uptown Girls*, playing opposite his *Clueless* costar Brittany Murphy.

Among Mr. Faison's other movies are Mike Cerrone's just-wrapped *It's Under My Skin* (with Whoopi Goldberg); Tom DiCillo's *Double Whammy*; Shawn Levy's *Big Fat Liar*; Harry Elfont and Deborah Kaplan's *Josie and the Pussycats* and *Can't Hardly Wait*; and Forest Whitaker's *Waiting to Exhale* (opposite Angela Bassett).

In addition to *Scrubs*, his television work has included a continuing role on *Felicity* as well on the *Clueless* series (for which he reprised his character of Murray from the original film). He has made guest appearances on a number of programs, including *Sister, Sister* and *New York Undercover*.

The native New Yorker began his acting career at age 5, attending the Children's School of Intuitive and God-Conscious Art and then pursuing his passion by studying theater at the Professional Children's School.

## BLAIR UNDERWOOD (Mark Harper)

Blair Underwood is an award-winning actor, writer, producer, and director.

He next stars in Tyler Perry's *Madea's Family Reunion*, which is due out in winter 2006. His other feature film credits include Steven Soderbergh's *Full Frontal* (opposite Julia Roberts); William Friedkin's *Rules of Engagement* (for which he won an NAACP Image Award); Mimi Leder's blockbuster *Deep Impact*; F. Gary Gray's *Set It Off*; Andrew Niccol's *Gattaca*; Mario Van Peebles' *Posse*; Arne Glimcher's *Just Cause* (opposite Sean Connery).

Mr. Underwood also starred in and produced the independent film *How Did It Feel?*, which Daniel Faraldo adapted and directed from his play; and plans to star in and produce the supernatural thriller *My Soul to Keep*. His earlier filmmaking credits include writing, executive-producing, and directing *The Second Coming*, a short film in which he portrayed Jesus Christ returning to Earth; and producing and starring in the independent feature *Asunder* (directed by Tim Reid) and the short film *Sister, I'm Sorry* (directed by his brother, Frank Underwood). He has also directed several music videos.

Among Mr. Underwood's series television work is a memorable recurring role opposite Cynthia Nixon on *Sex and the City* and his star turn as the lead voice of the hit animated series *Fatherhood* (based on Bill Cosby's book of the same name).

He has starred in several notable telefilms and miniseries. These include Roger Young's *Murder in Mississippi*, for which he was honored with an NAACP Image Award for portraying real-life slain civil rights worker James Chaney; *Mama Flora's Family*, for which he won an NAACP Image Award, directed by Peter Werner and based on Alex Haley's book of the same name; Kevin Hooks' award-winning *Heat Wave*; and Kevin Rodney Sullivan's *Soul of the Game*, in which he starred as sports legend Jackie Robinson.

Mr. Underwood's many stage credits include starring opposite Alfre Woodard of **Something New** in *Love Letters*; *Measure for Measure*, at the New York Shakespeare Festival; *Purlie*, as part of City Center's famed Encores! Series; and the one-man show *IM4: From the Mountaintop to Hip Hop*.

He recently had his nonfiction book [Before I Got Here](#) published. It is a collection of parents' stories and anecdotes speaking to the existence of a child's soul prior to birth.

Mr. Underwood and Ms. Woodard were among the founding members of ANSA (Artists for a New South Africa) in 1989.

## WENDY RAQUEL ROBINSON (Cheryl)

Wendy Raquel Robinson's film credits include Steve Carr's *Rebound* (opposite Martin Lawrence); Mark Brown's *Two Can Play That Game*; Donald Petrie's *Miss Congeniality*; and *A Thin Line Between Love and Hate*, directed by and starring Martin Lawrence.

She is a four-time NAACP Image Award nominee, for her work on the television shows *Cedric the Entertainer Presents* and *The Steve Harvey Show*. Three of those nominations were for her portrayal of school principal Regina Grier on the latter series, which ran for six seasons.

Ms. Robinson was previously a series regular on *Minor Adjustments* and (also with Steve Harvey) *Me and the Boys*. She has made guest appearances on *All of Us* and *NYPD Blue*, among other shows.

She graduated from Howard University with a BFA in Drama. Since then, she has performed on stage in productions of such plays as *Agnes of God*, *The Colored Museum*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Vanities* (which earned her an NAACP Theatre Award for Best Choreography and also a Best Actress nomination). In addition to performing and choreographing, she writes, directs, and produces for the stage.

In 1995, Ms. Robinson co-founded the Amazing Grace Conservatory (AGC), a theatrical training institute in South Central Los Angeles dedicated to building self-esteem through self-expression, for young actors and performers ages 7-21. Since 1998, she has been the celebrity spokesperson for the Los Angeles Black Business Expo & Trade Show.

She is proud to count among her honors the 2005 Distinguished Howard University Alumni Award; the NAACP Community Service Award; KJLH & Disneyland's Proven Achiever Award; and an award from Los Angeles Women of Courage.

#### **ALFRE WOODARD (Joyce McQueen)**

Alfre Woodard is a four-time Emmy Award winner, having been named Outstanding Lead Actress in a Miniseries or Special for her performance in Joseph Sargent's *Miss Evers' Boys* and honored for her guest-starring roles on *Hill Street Blues*, *L.A. Law*, and *The Practice*. She has received eight additional Emmy Award nominations, and was an Academy Award nominee for her work in Martin Ritt's *Cross Creek*.

Among her other honors are a CableACE Award for portraying Winnie Mandela in Philip Saville's *Mandela* (opposite Danny Glover); and, also for her performance in *Miss Evers' Boys*, a Golden Globe Award, SAG Award, and CableACE Award. She had earlier won a SAG Award for her performance in Lloyd Richards' telefilm *The Piano Lesson*, adapted by the late August Wilson from his own play, and was again a Golden Globe Award nominee for her work (opposite Ving Rhames) in Robert Townsend's telefilm *Holiday Heart*. She has been nominated 13 times for an NAACP Image Award, and won 7, including for Lamont Johnson's telefilm *Unnatural Causes* (in which she starred opposite the late John Ritter).

Ms. Woodard's many film credits include Bille Woodruff's *Beauty Shop* (with Golden Brooks of **Something New**); Joseph Ruben's *The Forgotten*; Gurinder Chadha's *What's Cooking?*; Gina Prince-Bythewood's *Love and Basketball* (with Sanaa Lathan of **Something New**); Lawrence Kasdan's *Mumford* and *Grand Canyon*; Maya Angelou's *Down in the Delta* (which she co-produced, and for which she earned an Independent Spirit Award nomination); Jonathan Frakes'

*Star Trek: First Contact*; Jocelyn Moorhouse's *How to Make an American Quilt*; Spike Lee's *Crooklyn*; Morgan

Freeman's *Bopha!*; John Sayles' *Passion Fish* (for which she won the Independent Spirit Award and was a Golden Globe Award nominee); Thomas Schlamme's *Miss Firecracker*; Robert Altman's *Health*; and Alan Rudolph's *Remember My Name* (which marked her feature debut). She will next be seen starring with Antonio Banderas in *Take the Lead*, directed by Liz Friedlander from a Dianne Houston screenplay.

In theater, she has starred in productions of *Me and Bessie*, *Drowning Crow*, *Map of the World*, and *A Winter's Tale* (all in NYC); *A Christmas Carol* and *Leander Stillwell* (at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles); *Horatio* and *Saved* (at the Arena Stage in Washington, D.C.); and *Split Second* (at the Mayfair Music Hall). She starred opposite Blair Underwood of **Something New** (with whom she co-founded Artists for a New South Africa [ANSA]) in the long-running L.A. staging of *Love Letters*; and executive-produced a staging of *East Texas Hot Links* at the Met Theatre.

Ms. Woodard can currently be seen on television in the national phenomenon *Desperate Housewives*.

### **GOLDEN BROOKS (Suzette)**

Cited by Time Magazine as "one of the most watchable women in the world," Golden Brooks is currently starring, for a sixth season, on the hit television series *Girlfriends*.

Her portrayal of authoress (of the empowering Oh, Hell Yes!) and recently remarried single mother Maya Wilkes has earned her the Multi-Cultural Prism Award for Best Actress in a Comedy Series, as well as an NAACP Image Award nomination. She has also co-hosted the national telecast of the latter ceremony.

Ms. Brooks' feature credits include starring as part of the ensembles of Bille Woodruff's *Beauty Shop* (with Alfre Woodard of **Something New**) and Mike Figgis' groundbreaking *Timecode*. Immediately prior to beginning work on *Girlfriends*, she starred in the acclaimed television series *Linc's*, which ran for two seasons.

The San Francisco native holds a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology with a minor in Theater from the University of California, Berkeley, as well as a Master's Degree in Creative Writing from Sarah Lawrence College. She is a classically trained actress and dancer, and has taught ballet, jazz, and modern dance. She is active onstage with the Roby Theater Company, a non-profit organization dedicated to developing plays about the black experience and interpreting established works; and with the Pediatric AIDS Foundation and AIDS Project Los Angeles.

### **TARAJI P. HENSON (Nedra)**

Taraji P. Henson last starred for **Something New** producer Stephanie Allain in Craig Brewer's *Hustle & Flow* (winner of the [Dramatic] Audience Award at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival), for which she was named Best Supporting Actress at the 2005 Black Movie Awards. She made her singing debut in the film, and is featured on the original motion picture soundtrack.

Ms. Henson's breakout screen role was in John Singleton's *Baby Boy*, and she recently reteamed with the director on the hit *Four Brothers*. She is currently filming Joe Carnahan's *Smokin' Aces*, starring as part of an ensemble cast that includes Ben Affleck, Alicia Keys, and Jeremy Piven.

She starred for three years on the dramatic television series *The Division*. Her telefilm credits include Anthony Shaw's *Murder, She Wrote: The Last Free Man* (with Angela Lansbury and Phylicia Rashad); Jeffrey Byrd's *Book of Love*; and Christopher Leitch's *Satan's School for Girls*. She has made guest appearances on such shows as *ER*, *Felicity*, *One on One*, and *House*.

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Ms. Henson is a graduate of Howard University.

### **EARL BILLINGS (Edmond McQueen)**

A familiar face and welcome presence to audiences, Earl Billings has been an actor for nearly four decades.

His films include Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini's award-winning *American Splendor*; Charles Stone III's *Mr. 3000*; Denzel Washington's *Antwone Fisher*; Tony Scott's *Crimson Tide*; Carl Franklin's *One False Move*; Jim Kouf's *Stakeout*; Oz Scott's *Bustin' Loose*; William A. Graham's *Part 2, Sounder*; Arthur Marks' *J.D.'s Revenge*; Joseph Sargent's *White Lightning*; and, upcoming, Jason Reitman's *Thank You for Smoking*.

Mr. Billings has appeared on television in recurring roles on such series as *What's Happening!!*, *South Central*, *The Parkers*, *Home Improvement*, and *Palmerstown, USA*; in guest appearances on, among other shows, *ER* and *The Guardian* (with his fellow **Something New** actor Simon Baker); in such miniseries as *Roots: The Next Generations*; and in national commercials for Disneyland, IBM, Southwest Airlines, Taco Bell, and (since 1999) AFLAC.

His stage work has taken him to, among other theaters, the Mark Taper Forum (in L.A.), the Denver Center Theatre, and St. Louis Black Repertory. The Cleveland native learned his craft at the famed Karamu House Theater, which was the country's first interracial community theater and cultural center. There, he studied acting, dancing, and singing. He would later become director of performing arts at Karamu, before taking a comparable position at the Arkansas Arts Center, in Little Rock. Subsequently he became artistic director of The Free Southern Theater, a radical civil rights theater group in New Orleans. That great city was where his film and television career began.

# Something New

## About the Filmmakers

### SANAA HAMRI (Director)

**Something New** marks Sanaa Hamri's feature directorial debut.

Ms. Hamri has worked as a top director and editor of music videos, earning attention from performers, the industry, and the viewing public. She has demonstrated visual flair and explored narrative techniques in her collaborations with such artists as Prince ("Million Dayz"; "Call My Name"; "Musicology," which brought her multiple MTV Video Music Award nominations), India.Arie ("The Truth"; "Ready for Love"; "Little Things," for which Ms. Hamri won an NAACP Image Award), Common featuring Mary J. Blige ("Come Close," for which she was an MTV Video Music Award nominee), Heather Headley ("He Is"), Jadakiss ("Ask Why"), Jay-Z ("Song Cry"), Sting ("Send Your Love"), and Destiny's Child ("8 Days of Christmas" and "Nasty Girl"). She has also been at the helm of live concert filmings for Prince and Mariah Carey.

As a teenager, she emigrated from her native Morocco to study theater at NYC's prestigious Sarah Lawrence College. Shortly after earning her degree, she went to work for noted cinematographer Malik Sayeed at his post-production company Salaam Inc. There, she learned editing skills and was mentored by Mr. Sayeed. He soon gave Ms. Hamri her first editing job, for the group Born Jamaicans; she also began working with famed music video director Hype Williams.

Two years later, she became a director herself. Her big break was with the "Blind Love" video for the group 1 Life 2 Live. The clip attracted the attention of Mariah Carey, whom Ms. Hamri then collaborated with extensively. Their videos together included the benefit clip "O Holy Night"; "Don't Stop" (featuring Mystikal); and "Cry Baby" (featuring Snoop Dogg).

Ms. Hamri is the daughter of a North African-Muslim artist/painter father and a Russian-American Jewish mother, and speaks four languages.

### KRISS TURNER (Screenplay)

**Something New** is Kriss Turner's first feature screenplay. She is currently scripting a musical.

She is currently co-executive producer of the hit series *Everybody Hates Chris*. A television writer/producer for the past twelve years, she has written and produced such shows as *Cosby*, *Living Single*, and *The Bernie Mac Show*. Her work on the latter two earned her NAACP Image Awards, and she has also received Humanitas and Peabody Awards for *The Bernie Mac Show*.

Ms. Turner grew up in Los Angeles and Seattle. She graduated from the University of Washington with a B.A. in Communications.

She is single.

## STEPHANIE ALLAIN (Producer)

Stephanie Allain is one of the film industry's top black producers.

The New Orleans native began her industry career in 1985, working as a freelance script reader. In that capacity, she was staffed at Creative Artists Agency in 1986. She was admitted to the Story Analyst Union the following year, and went on to work as a story analyst for several major studios. Among them was Columbia Pictures, which she joined in 1989 as creative executive under Dawn Steel and Amy Pascal. At the studio, Ms. Allain championed writer/director John Singleton's *Boyz n the Hood*. The 1991 film world-premiered at the Cannes International Film Festival and became an instant critical and commercial hit, earning two Academy Award nominations and ushering in a generation of urban-themed films.

At Columbia, Ms. Allain rose through the ranks to become senior vice president of production, which was and remains the highest production position for an African-American studio executive. In addition to John Singleton (who made two more films, *Poetic Justice* and *Higher Learning*, with her at the studio), she launched the careers of such filmmakers as Robert Rodriguez (with *El Mariachi* and *Desperado*), Darnell Martin (with *I Like It Like That*), and Andrew Fleming (with *The Craft*).

In 1996, she was named president of Jim Henson Pictures. At the company, she oversaw all phases of development and production of Caroline Thompson's *Buddy*, Tim Hill's *Muppets from Space*, and Gary Halvorson's *The Adventures of Elmo in Grouchland*.

Ms. Allain joined the management and production company 3 Arts Entertainment in 2000. While at 3 Arts, she developed projects for clients and produced Reggie Rock Bythewood's *Biker Boyz*.

In 2003, she founded her own production company, Homegrown Pictures. Her first project, writer/director Michael Caleo's short film *40*, premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival. She then executive-produced John Robert Hoffman's *Good Boy!*

Ms. Allain reunited with John Singleton as producers of writer/director Craig Brewer's independent feature *Hustle & Flow*, starring Terrence Howard. The film world-premiered to a tremendous response at the 2005 Sundance Film Festival, garnering critical and audience acclaim and winning the Festival's (Dramatic) Audience and Cinematography Awards. The film recently won three 2005 Black Movie Awards, and was also nominated for Best Picture.

With Craig Brewer, she has formed a new production company, Southern Cross the Dog, which has a two-year, first-look deal with Paramount Pictures. Its first production, written and directed by Mr. Brewer and also produced by John Singleton, is *Black Snake Moan* (starring Samuel L. Jackson, Christina Ricci, and Justin Timberlake), for Paramount Classics release in the fall of 2006. She is in pre-production on her third film with Mr. Brewer, *Devil Music*.

Ms. Allain holds a B.A. in Literature/Creative Writing from UC Santa Cruz. She teaches producing in the Entertainment Studies Division of UCLA, as well as corporate story seminars. She sits on the board of FIND's (formerly IFP's) Project Involve, and is a member of the Producers Guild of America.

## PRESTON HOLMES (Executive Producer)

Preston Holmes' 30 years in the film industry have taken him from Harlem and South Central to Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

After attending Princeton University, he enrolled in the prestigious Directors Guild of America, East assistant director training program. He was accepted into the DGA as an assistant director, and began working in commercial production in NYC. Making the move to feature films, he soon became a production manager.

Mr. Holmes joined Spike Lee's filmmaking team for the production of the director's influential *Do the Right Thing*, *Mo' Better Blues*, and *Jungle Fever*, and was co-producer of the epic *Malcolm X*. The duo's collaboration has continued over the years, with projects such as *Crooklyn*, *Sucker Free City*, and *She Hate Me* (which Mr. Holmes produced).

In the early 1990s, he co-produced *Juice*, the directorial debut of Ernest Dickerson, which starred the late Tupac Shakur, and Mario Van Peebles' *New Jack City*. Ret teaming with the latter filmmaker, Mr. Holmes subsequently produced both *Posse* and *Panther*.

In his stint as head of Def Pictures (working with Russell Simmons and Stan Lathan), he developed and executive-produced Vondie Curtis Hall's *Gridlock'd* (which reunited him with Tupac Shakur) and Lionel Martin's *Def Jam's How to Be a Player*.

Mr. Holmes' subsequent projects as producer included the award-winning telefilm *Boycott*, directed by Clark Johnson and starring Jeffrey Wright as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; the Academy Award-nominated documentary feature *Tupac: Resurrection* (directed by Lauren Lazin); and (as associate producer) Craig Brewer's *Hustle & Flow*, with **Something New** producer Stephanie Allain.

He is developing, among other projects, a film on the life of African-American movie pioneer Oscar Micheaux; and *Live 2 Tell*, which will be based on a screenplay by Tupac Shakur and which Mr. Holmes will produce with Mr. Shakur's mother Afeni.

Mr. Holmes' most recent project as producer is Vondie Curtis Hall's *Waist Deep*, for Rogue Pictures release. The action thriller stars Tyrese Gibson, Meagan Good, Larenz Tate, and The Game.

## JOE PICHIRALLO (Executive Producer)

Joe Pichirallo has worked for the last 13 years as a studio executive, supervising feature film productions all over the world.

Previously senior vice president at Fox Searchlight Pictures, he was until recently executive vice president of production for Focus Features.

At Focus, he directly supervised all stages of development and production for **Something New**. He also oversaw Allen Coulter's upcoming *Truth, Justice and the American Way*, starring Adrien Brody, Ben Affleck, and Diane Lane; and (for Rogue Pictures) Don Mancini's *Seed of Chucky*.

Before his stint at Focus, Mr. Pichirallo worked for nearly eight years at Searchlight, where he was one of the original executives hired to launch the division in 1994. He oversaw more than a dozen Searchlight movies, including Denzel Washington's award-winning directorial debut, *Antwone Fisher*; Mark Romanek's *One Hour Photo*, starring Robin Williams; Bob Dolman's *The Banger Sisters*, starring Goldie Hawn, Susan Sarandon, and Geoffrey Rush; Tamara Jenkins' *Slums of Beverly Hills*, starring Alan Arkin, Marisa Tomei, and Natasha Lyonne; Edward Burns' *The Brothers McMullen* and *She's the One*, starring Jennifer Aniston and Cameron Diaz; and Philip Kaufman's *Quills*, which was nominated for three Academy Awards.

Before helping to start Searchlight, he was an executive at HBO Pictures, where he supervised two films directed by the late John Frankenheimer; *Against the Wall*, starring Samuel L. Jackson, and *The Burning Season*, starring the late Raul Julia. Also at HBO, he supervised Robert Harmon's *Gotti*.

Mr. Pichirallo had an earlier career as a reporter for The Washington Post, covering national security, Congress, politics, and the courts. He spent a year as a screenwriting fellow at the American Film Institute (AFI), and currently is a senior lecturer there, teaching a course entitled "The Profession." He is also a member of the AFI's Conservatory Board Advisory Committee, which reviews the film school's curriculum. He is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, where he was editor-in-chief of the school's newspaper.

### **SHANE HURLBUT (Director of Photography)**

Shane Hurlbut most recently finished work as cinematographer of Vondie Curtis Hall's *Waist Deep*, a Rogue Pictures release produced by **Something New** executive producer Preston Holmes.

Mr. Hurlbut became the youngest cinematographer ever nominated for an A.S.C. Award for a debut feature when he was nominated for Rob Cohen's award-winning telefilm *The Rat Pack*. He reunited with the latter director on the feature film *The Skulls* before collaborating twice apiece with John Stockwell (on *crazy/beautiful* and *Into the Blue*) and Charles Stone III (on *Drumline* and *Mr. 3000*). His other credits as director of photography include Greg Marcks' *11:14* and Bill Paxton's *The Greatest Game Ever Played*.

The Ithaca, NY native graduated from Emerson College. He began in the industry by working as a gaffer on commercials and music videos, learning from such established cinematographers as Daniel Peal and Joseph Yacoe before making the leap himself on videos for Nirvana, Smashing Pumpkins, and Stone Temple Pilots.

### **MAYNE BERKE (Production Designer)**

Mayne Berke's features as production designer include Garry Marshall's blockbuster *The Princess Diaries*; Tim Story's *Taxi*; Clark Johnson's *S.W.A.T.*; Robert Singer's telefilm *War Stories*; Stephen

Herek's *Rock Star*; John Herzfeld's *15 Minutes* and telefilm *Don King: Only in America*; Troy Miller's *Jack Frost*; and David Mirkin's *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*.

He earlier worked as art director on such features as Stephen Herek's *Don't Tell Mom the Babysitter's Dead* and the multipart film *Four Rooms*, which was directed by Quentin Tarantino, Alexandre Rockwell, Robert Rodriguez, and Allison Anders. Mr. Berke reteamed with the latter two filmmakers as art director on, respectively, *From Dusk Till Dawn* and *Grace of My Heart*.

He also designed the memorable Levi's commercial "Elevator Fantasy," directed by Michael Bay, which won a Clio Award.

Mr. Berke received his Master of Fine Arts degree in Art Direction and Theatrical Design from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. There, he studied with such noted theatrical designers as Oliver Smith, and with such famed lighting designers as Jennifer Tipton and the late John Gleason.

### **HOPE HANAFIN (Costume Designer)**

Hope Hanafin is New York Women in Film and Television's 2005 Designing Hollywood honoree. She was also a 2005 Emmy Award nominee for her work on Joseph Sargent's telefilm *Warm Springs*.

Her other feature credits as costume designer include Wayne Wang's *Because of Winn-Dixie*; Paul Mazursky's *Faithful*; Harry Winer's *House Arrest*; Paul M. Glaser's *The Air Up There* and *Kazaam*; James Foley's *After Dark*, *My Sweet*; Alan Rudolph's *Mortal Thoughts*; and Mel Smith's hit *Bean*.

In addition to *Warm Springs*, Ms. Hanafin has designed the costumes for several other notable telefilms, enjoying multiple collaborations with a number of directors. Her credits include George C. Wolfe's *Lackawanna Blues*; Alfonso Arau's *A Painted House*; Uli Edel's *King of Texas*; Jane Anderson's *Normal* and *When Billie Beat Bobby*; Joseph Sargent's *For Love or Country: The Arturo Sandoval Story* and *A Lesson Before Dying* (for which she received a Costume Designers Guild [CDG] Award nomination); Ron Lagomarsino's *My Sister's Keeper* and *Running Mates*; Paul Mazursky's *Winchell* (for which she received a CDG Award nomination); Harry Winer's *Stay the Night* and miniseries *JFK: Reckless Youth*; Karen Arthur's remake *Shadow of a Doubt* and miniseries *The Jacksons: An American Dream*; and Tom Moore's *Geppetto*, for which she won a CDG Award and was nominated for an Emmy Award.

She holds a BA with Honors from Santa Clara University, as well as an MFA with Honors from New York University.

### **MELISSA KENT (Editor)**

Melissa Kent was nominated for an American Cinema Editors (A.C.E.) Award for her work on *The Reagans*, the miniseries directed by Robert Allan Ackerman and starring Judy Davis and James Brolin.

She has been film editor on, among other features, John Stockwell's *crazy/beautiful* and, again for Mr. Ackerman, the telefilm *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*.

Ms. Kent graduated from UCLA with a Bachelor's Degree in Theater. Her entrée into the editing field was as an intern at *Entertainment Tonight*, and she segued into motion pictures as an assistant film editor.

In his capacity as executive producer, Francis Ford Coppola hired her as additional editor on Gregory Nava's *My Family/mi familia*, and then brought her in as co-editor on his own directorial project, *John Grisham's The Rainmaker*. She has since edited documentaries for Eleanor Coppola, as well as Sofia Coppola's acclaimed debut feature *The Virgin Suicides* and, most recently, Francis Ford Coppola's restored expansion of *The Outsiders*.

### **WENDY MELVOIN and LISA COLEMAN (Music)**

In constantly exploring the musical language, Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman have worked with a wealth of culturally diverse artists.

They met as children, which was also when they began studying and playing music. Their fathers, Mike Melvoin and Gary Coleman respectively, were studio musicians who became friends. The two families became very close.

In 1980, Ms. Coleman joined recording artist Prince on his "Dirty Mind" album and tour, marking the start of a collaboration that lasted several years and also encompassed work with The Time and Vanity 6. Ms. Melvoin rejoined her old friend in 1983, after singing background vocals on one cut of Prince's "1999" album. Together, they wrote and recorded with Prince and the Revolution on the "Purple Rain," "Around the World in a Day," "Parade," and "Sign o' the Times" albums.

They then went on to make records of their own. Among these have been "Wendy and Lisa," "Fruit at the Bottom," "EROICA," and "Girl Bros." They have written and produced songs and albums for such artists as Seal, Neil Finn, and meshell n'degeocello; and played on albums by Sheryl Crow, k.d. lang, and Tricky, among others.

Combining their pop and orchestral skills, Ms. Melvoin and Ms. Coleman have scored several films, among them John N. Smith's *Dangerous Minds*; Christopher Scott Cherot's *Hav Plenty*; and George Tillman Jr.'s *Soul Food*. Their scores for television include the cult series *Carnivàle* as well as the long-running NBC hit *Crossing Jordan*.

# Something New

## The Cast (in order of appearance)

Kenya Denise McQueen	Sanaa Lathan
DJ Fuzzy Fantabulous	as Himself
Leah Cahan	Katharine Towne
Jack Pino	Stanley DeSantis
Waiter	K.C. Clyde
Cheryl	Wendy Raquel Robinson
Suzzette	Golden Brooks
Nedra	Taraji P. Henson
Rashid Mohammed	Marcus Brown
Dr. Brockton	Russell Hornsby
Brian Kelly	Simon Baker
Starbucks Employee	Danny Wooten
Walter	Mike Epps
Mrs. Cahan	Lee Garlington
Maria	Tonita Castro
Edwin	Matt Malloy
Bill Lebree	David Monahan
Darren	Gabriel Tigerman
Nelson McQueen	Donald Faison
Stacy	Tanisha Harper
Joyce McQueen	Alfre Woodard
Edmond McQueen	Earl Billings
Kiki	Michelle Griffin
Donald Byrd Dancers	Tanya Wideman-Davis
	Rocklin Thompson
Sommone	as Herself
Paul	Eric Ekholm
Kyle	Henry Simmons
Luna	Kimberly Barnett
Mark Harper	Blair Underwood
Real Estate Agent	Deya Marshea Smith
Penelope	Julie Mond
Lauren	Rose Rollins
Emcee	Rick Fitts
Young Woman	Raina Lewis
Stunt Double (Kenya)	Amanda LeFlore
Stunt Coordinator	Julius LeFlore

# Something New

## The Filmmakers and the Credits

Directed by	Sanaa Hamri
Written by	Kriss Turner
Produced by	Stephanie Allain
Executive Producers	Preston Holmes
	Joe Pichirallo
Director of Photography	Shane Hurlbut
Production Designer	Mayne Berke
Editor	Melissa Kent
Costume Designer	Hope Hanafin
Music by	Wendy Melvoin and Lisa Coleman
Music Supervisors	Spring Aspers Paul Stewart
Casting by	Jeanne McCarthy, CSA
Unit Production Manager/Line Producer	Dwight Williams
First Assistant Director	Noga Isackson
Second Assistant Director	Chip Touhey
Set Decorator	Casey Hallenbeck
A-Camera/Steadicam Operator	Charles Papert
First Assistant A-Camera	Don Carlson
Second Assistant A-Camera	Matthew Stenerson
B-Camera Operator	Gary Hatfield
First Assistant B-Camera	Steven Mann
Second Assistant B-Camera	Derek Edwards
Camera Loader	Gary Bevans
Camera Production Assistant	Po-King Chan
First Assistant Editor	Trudy Yee
Script Supervisor	Cheryl Starbuck-Rocca
Production Sound Mixer	Susumu Tokunow
Boom Operator	John Hays
Sound Assistant	Tony McCovey
Costume Supervisor	Winnie Brown-Willis
Set Costumers	Elaine McGhee Katie Saunders
Costumer	Devon Anderson
Costume Production Assistant	Nora Phillips Pedersen
Key Makeup Artist	Beverly Jo Pryor
First Assistant Makeup Artist	Debra Denson
Ms. Lathan's Makeup Artist	Motoko Honjo
Additional Makeup Artist	Cole Patterson

Department Head/Hair	Kimberly Kimbel
Key Hairstylist	Lillie Frierson
Additional Hairstylist	Sean Smith
Chief Lighting Technician	Todd R. Higgins
Best Boy Electric	David Terpin
Rigging Gaffer	Michael Wagstaff
Lamp Operators	Jeffrey Chin
	David Russell
	David Hagadorn
Key Grip	Jorge Guzman
Best Boy Grip	Robert Nellis
Dolly Grip	Michael Listorti
Key Rigging Grip	Daniel Wade
Best Boy Rigging Grip	Darryl St. Juste
Grips	Todd Masterson
	Donell Wiley
	Kevin Banks
	Matthew Perry
	Mark Glover
	Michael Blaze
	Stan W. Cockerell
	Donald Byrd
	Jeni Breen
	John Hartigan
	Jason Dodd
	Susan Ehrhart
	Demelza Cronin
	Jamaica Carter
	Juana Marie Franklin
	Nicole Abellera
	Jaime Harlan
	Chad Darnell
	Deborah German Casting
	Kai Akpan
	Greg Pardun
	Michael Farah
	Marie Rodriguez
	Robert Barrett
	Jason Babiszewski
	Tyrone Dixon
	Janelle Candace Connor
	Claire Barcos
	Michael Slone
	LouAnn Wu
	Ken Wu
	Lorenzo de la Rosa
	Shemesha Collins
Property Master	
Assistant Property Master	
Choreographer	
Assistant Choreographer	
Special Effects Coordinator	
Special Effects Technician	
Production Coordinator	
Assistant Production Coordinator	
Production Secretary	
2nd Second Assistant Director	
Casting Associate	
Casting Assistant	
Extras Casting by	
Extras Casting Associates	
Assistant to Ms. Allain	
Assistants to Ms. Hamri	
Assistant to Mr. Holmes	
Assistant to Ms. Lathan	
Office Production Assistants	
Key Set Production Assistant	
Set Production Assistants	

Editorial Production Assistant  
Storyboard Artist  
Leadman  
Buyer  
On-Set Dresser  
Draper  
Swing Gang  
Post-Production Supervisor  
Supervising Sound Editor  
Dialogue Editors

Sound Effects Editors

First Assistant Sound Editor  
Assistant Sound Editor  
ADR Voice Casting  
ADR Mixer  
ADR Recordist  
Re-Recording Mixers

Recordist  
Re-Recorded at  
Foley Artist  
Assistant Foley Artist  
Foley Editor  
Foley Mixers

Foley Recorded at

Additional Voices

Caterer

Craft Service

Set Medic  
Set Nurse  
Construction Coordinator  
Construction Foreman  
Labor Foreman  
Paint Foreman

Stephen Sprague  
Len Morganti  
Mark Sakamoto  
Suellen McClung  
James McDermott  
Joseph Recchia  
Robert Richardson  
Bradley M. Goodman  
David Giammarco  
Kim Drummond  
Wayne Griffin  
Jonathan A. Klein  
D. Chris Smith  
Galen Goodpastor  
Rupert Nadeau  
The Reel Team  
Thomas J. O'Connell  
Rick Canelli  
Gregory H. Watkins, C.A.S.  
David Giammarco  
Eric Flickenger  
Warner Bros. Post-Production Services  
Maureen Murphy  
Elaine Stef  
Robert Hunter  
Gordon Sproule  
Dean Giammarco  
dbc Sound Inc.  
Vancouver, Canada  
Wendy Hoffman, W.K. Stratton,  
Theo Borders, June Christopher,  
David Cowgill, Don Fullilove,  
Karen Huie, Rif Hutton,  
Donna Lynn Leavy, Jonathon Nichols,  
Devika Parikh, Shani Pride,  
J. Lamont Pope, Al Rodrigo,  
Stan Sellers, Dennis Singletary  
Tomkats Catering  
Dirk Q. Long  
Dave Kasubowski  
Jesse Cervantes  
Samuel M. Cobb  
Kathy Johnson  
John Rutchland III  
Kenny Hayes  
Steve Badillo  
Donnie R. Puga

Paint Gang Boss	Mike Reiber
Painters	William Ermi
	Chance Weight
Greens Coordinator	Michael McCombe
Locations Managers	Andree Juviler
	Fermin Davalos
Assistant Locations Managers	Janet Harold
	Margaret Giordano
	Kevin Danchisko
Insurance provided by	AON/Albert G. Ruben
Legal Services provided by	Sheppard, Mullin, Richter & Hampton
	Robert Darwell
	Alexis Garcia
Product Placement	Jaffe Entertainment
Script Clearances provided by	Ashley Kravitz
Music Legal and Clearance	Christine Bergren
	Jennifer Pray
Production Accountant	Chris Kahn
First Assistant Accountant	Carrie Jones
Payroll Accountant	Kathy Edwards
Post-Production Accountant	Film Auditors, Inc.
Production Video Assist	Martin Glover
Unit Publicist	Cassandra O. Butcher
Still Photographer	Sidney Baldwin
Transportation Coordinator	Walter "Duke" Foster
Transportation Captain	Spencer Foster
Animal Trainers	Studio Animal Services
	Paul Caladria
	Shelley Leidner
Title Design by	Deborah Ross Film Design
Title Animation by	Cybermotion
End Titles	Scarlet Letters
Digital Timer	Frank Roman
Color Science	Doug Jaqua
Digital Laboratory Project Managers	Nancy Fuller
	Jesse Kobayashi
Digital Dailies Timer	Tim Vincent
Digital Data Management	Jeff Charles
Digital Data Conform	Valance Eisleben
	Stacy Underhill
Digital Film Recording Services	Kyle Devriendt
Visual Effects by	X1FX
Visual Effects Supervisor	Mark Larranaga
Visual Effects Artists	Robb Ozaeta
	Anita Razzano
Dolby Sound Consultant	James E. Wright

Avids Supplied by  
Score Engineer and Mixer  
Score Recorded and Mixed at  
Music Editorial Services by  
Music Editors

Music Editorial Associate  
Music Coordinators

Runway, Inc.  
Richard Davis  
Girl Bros. Studios  
MICDI Productions, Inc.  
Jennifer Barak  
Michael Dittrick  
Avital Korin  
Bronwen Boyan  
Rodarick Harden

## Songs

"Quite Simply"  
Written by Chris "TRAXX" Rogers,  
Thomas Calloway  
Performed by Tori Alamaze  
Featuring Cee-Lo Green  
Produced by Chris "TRAXX" Rogers  
Courtesy of Radiculture Records

"Love" Koop Remix  
Written by Darryl Swann,  
Nancy Joy Kaye  
Performed by Rosey  
Courtesy of The Island Def Jam Music Group  
Under License from Universal Music Enterprises

"The Learning (Burn)"  
Written by Albert Johnson,  
Kejuan Muchita, Tajuan Perry,  
Lavita Raynor  
Performed by Mobb Deep  
Courtesy of Sony BMG Music Entertainment  
By Arrangement with  
Sony BMG Music Entertainment  
Big Noyd appears courtesy of Noyd, Inc.  
By Arrangement with The Royalty Network, Inc.  
Vita appears courtesy of  
The Island Def Jam Music Group

"Ya Rayah"  
Written by A. Amrani, R. Taha  
Performed by Rachid Taha  
Courtesy of Barclay France  
Under License from  
Universal Music Enterprises

"Look What You've Done to Me"

"Love"  
Written by Darryl Swann,  
Nancy Joy Kaye  
Performed by Rosey  
Courtesy of  
The Island Def Jam Music Group  
Under License from  
Universal Music Enterprises

"Too Sweet"  
Written by Malcolm Cross  
Performed by Morello  
Courtesy of Bumbo Songs

"Who Is He and What Is He to You"  
Written by Stanley Wayne McKenney,  
Bill Withers  
Performed by Me'Shell Ndege'Ocello  
Courtesy of  
Maverick Recording Company  
By Arrangement with  
Warner Music Group  
Film & TV Licensing

"Lay a Little Lovin' on Me"  
Written by Jimmy Radcliffe, Buddy Scott  
Performed by Jimmy Radcliffe  
Courtesy of RCA Records Label  
By Arrangement with  
Sony BMG Music Entertainment

"Foxy Mamma"  
Written by Bazyle Fonttenaus,  
Nyalle Iameh  
Performed by The Funky Hippeez  
Courtesy of Luke Eddins at Luke Hits

Written by Charles Woods, Jr.  
Performed by Sheila Skipworth  
Courtesy of Now Again Records

"Seconds of Pleasure"  
Written by Van Hunt  
Performed by Van Hunt  
Courtesy of Capitol Records  
Under License from EMI Film & TV Music

"Tu Eres Bella"  
Written by M. Miglis,  
R. Pencheff, J. Duran Webb  
Performed by Topaz Sound & Cubanito 20 - 02  
Courtesy of Topaz Records  
By Arrangement with Zync Music

"Beng Beng Beng"  
Written by Femi Kuti  
Performed by Femi Kuti  
Courtesy of Barclay France  
Under License from Universal Music Enterprises

"Sneak a Freak"  
Written by Aja Graydon, Fatin Dantzer,  
Steve McKie, Conley Whitfield  
Performed by Kindred The Family Soul  
Courtesy of Hidden Beach Recordings

"Runaway"  
Written by Andrew Grover Zinn  
and Dena Mari Chutuk  
Performed by The Deadly Twins  
Courtesy of Media Creature Music/  
We're Here to Save the Music

"Drop Something"  
Written by Hassan Mahmoud, G. McDowell  
Performed by Chop Block  
Courtesy of Delicious Vinyl Records

"Esperanza Vers. 2"  
Written by Francisco Zarate  
Performed by Francisco Zarate  
Courtesy of Next Thing Entertainment

"Chupa Chupa"  
Written by R. Casamayor-Grinan,  
C. Pencheff  
Performed by El Medico del Rap  
Courtesy of Topaz Records  
By Arrangement with Zync Music

"Dimelo"  
Written by Jose Luna, Vito Colapietro,  
Neely Dinkins  
Performed by R Luna and The Co-Stars  
Courtesy of The Co-Stars

"Baby I Need You"  
Written by V. Charles,  
D. Thompson, C. Birch  
Performed by Wayne Wonder  
and Demolition  
Courtesy of Delicious Vinyl

"Upon Meeting Someone New"  
Written by George Gordon, Van Hunt,  
Douglas Smith, Curtis Whitehead  
Performed by Van Hunt  
Courtesy of Capitol Records  
Under License from  
EMI Film & TV Music

"How We Do This"  
Written by J. Kincaid, A. Levy,  
S. Bartholomew, N. Russo  
Performed by The Brand New Heavies  
Featuring Nicole Russo  
Courtesy of TBNH Ltd.  
By Arrangement with Zync Music

"I Pretend I'm Loving You"  
Written by Jimmy Radcliffe, Buddy Scott  
Performed by Jimmy Radcliffe  
Courtesy of Black Patch Productions,  
By Exclusive Arrangement with  
Media Creature Music

"Family Reunion"  
Written by Jill H. Scott, Ivan Barias, Carvin Haggins,  
George Kerr, Larry Roberts  
Performed by Jill Scott  
Courtesy of Hidden Beach Recordings  
Contains Elements of  
"Look Over Your Shoulder"  
Performed by The Escorts  
Courtesy of George Kerr Music

Soundtrack available on Lakeshore Records

American Humane Association monitored the animal action.  
No animal was harmed in the making of this film. (AHA #00297)

Special Thanks

Alsia Soiset  
NPG  
Zanne Jewelry  
Randy Jackson  
Lula & Erwin Washington  
Tameka Washington  
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Kimberly Williams, Magic Johnson Enterprises  
Berté  
Sue Wong  
Swarovski  
Dominique Cohen  
Friar Tux Shop Formalwear  
After Hours Formalwear

Home Furnishings provided by Linens 'N Things

Digital Motion Picture Laboratory Services  
Digital Film Recording  
Digital Intermediate Services  
by  
Laser Pacific Media Corporation  
A Kodak Company

Color by Deluxe

Prints by Technicolor

Filmed with Panavision Cameras & Lenses

Produced & Distributed on Kodak Motion Picture Film Stock

Dolby SR/SRD/DTS, in selected theaters

Aspect Ratio: 1:85/1 [Flat]

MPAA Rating: PG-13 (for sexual references)

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**A Focus Features Release**