

## First Sunday

**Release Date:** January 11, 2008

**Studio:** Screen Gems (Sony)

**Director:** David E. Talbert

**Screenwriter:** David E. Talbert

**Starring:** Ice Cube, Katt Williams, Tracy Morgan, Loretta Devine, Michael Beach, Keith David, Regina Hall, Malinda Williams, Clifton Powell, Nick Turturro, Chi McBride

**Genre:** Comedy

**MPAA Rating:** PG-13 (for language, some sexual humor, and brief drug references)

**Plot Summary:** In this hilarious comedy, Durell (Ice Cube) and LeeJohn (Tracy Morgan) are best friends and bumbling petty criminals. When told they have one week to pay a \$17,000 debt or Durell will lose his son, they come up with a desperate scheme to rob their neighborhood church. Instead, they end up spending the night in the presence of the Lord and are forced to deal with much more than they bargained for.

The all-star cast also includes Katt Williams as Rickey, the flamboyant church choir-director, Chi McBride as the Pastor, Malinda Williams as his outspoken daughter and Regina Hall as the mother of Durell's son.

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*First Sunday unleashes the screwball antics of a pair of hilariously inept petty criminals in a funny and heartwarming comedy about good intentions, bad decisions and second chances. The film stars Ice Cube (Barbershop, Friday), Katt Williams (Friday After Next, Norbit) and Tracy Morgan ("30 Rock," "SNL"). Co-starring is an esteemed ensemble cast including Loretta Devine (This Christmas, "Grey's Anatomy"), Michael Beach ("Third Watch," Soul Food), Keith David (Barbershop, ATL), Regina Hall (the Scary Movie franchise), Malinda Williams (Tyler Perry's Daddy's Little Girls, TV's "Soul Food") and Chi McBride ("Pushing Daisies," "Boston Public"). First Sunday is written and directed by David E. Talbert. The film is produced by Talbert, David McIlvain, Tim Story, Ice Cube and Matt Alvarez. The executive producers are Stacy Kolker Cramer, Neil Machlis, Ronald Muhammed and Julie Yorn. The accomplished production team includes director of photography Alan Caso, ASC, production designer Dina Lipton, editor Jeffrey Wolf, A.C.E., and costume designer Gersha Phillips. The music is by Stanley Clarke, music supervision is by Spring Aspers and casting is by Kim Taylor-Coleman, CSA.*

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It's a steamy summer day in inner-city Baltimore when Durell Washington (Ice Cube) learns that his son's mother (Regina Hall) plans to take Durell Jr. to Atlanta to live-unless Durell can come up with \$17,000 to help her keep her hair salon afloat. A dedicated if chronically underemployed dad, Durell has spent years trying to give his son a better chance at life than he had. He has walked the boy to the school bus each morning, tried to turn his gift for tinkering into a job and resisted the harebrained criminal schemes of his lifelong friend LeeJohn Jackson (Tracy Morgan).

But after another frustrating day of job hunting, Durell's desperation overcomes his common sense and he agrees to help LeeJohn deliver a truckload of stolen wheelchairs

for a local thug. The job ends in chaos when LeeJohn panics and leads the police on a wild car chase through the city. Sentenced to 5,000 hours of community service by an irate judge (Keith David), Durell is deeper in debt than ever when their erstwhile employer demands \$12,000 for the lost wheelchairs-or else. Almost \$30,000 in the red, the pair seems to be out of options until LeeJohn convinces his pal to go along with another one of his goofball capers: This time, all they have to do is rob their local neighborhood church.

The would-be bandits break in intending to crack the safe and get out fast. Instead, they stumble onto a church meeting in progress and discover the First Sunday collection money is already missing. Seeing no way back, Durell finds himself holding a room full of indignant church folk hostage.

As the night wears on and the temperature in the sanctuary rises, long simmering feuds among the church leaders begin to boil over. Pastor Mitchell (Chi McBride) does his best to referee a heated dispute between his beautiful and fiery daughter Tianna (Malinda Williams) and smooth talking Deacon Randy (Michael Beach) over the best use for the money. Sweet church secretary Sister Doris (Loretta Devine) reaches out to LeeJohn and makes him understand the error of his ways. All the while, flamboyant choir director Rickey (Katt Williams) tries to ignore the ruckus and proceed with his choir practice.

Before the evening is over, the money will turn up, the thief will be revealed and Durell and LeeJohn will come away with something more important than money.

## **ABOUT THE PRODUCTION**

"You see, it was no mistake how those two boys landed in our church. They're just like Saul before he became Paul. They wasn't all bad, just a hundred and eighty degrees from good. They just needed a change in direction."

-Momma T, First Sunday

Writer and director David E. Talbert recalls conceiving the idea for First Sunday, his feature film debut, after attending a function at a Baltimore church. "My friends and I went across the street to get something to eat. As I was sitting there looking back at the droves of people emptying out of the church, as well as the people that were in the caf, I thought about what would happen if someone plotted to rob the church," he says.

Talbert, the creative force behind more than a dozen award-winning plays, shared the concept with his manager and producer David McIlvain. "That's how I work. I'll tell a few people about it and see if their eyes light up," says Talbert.

"David had pitched the story to me several years ago and it stayed with me," says McIlvain, whose producing credits include The Exorcism of Emily Rose and the upcoming Tim Allen comedy, The Six Wives of Henry Lefay. "About a year later, I

called him up and said 'I've been thinking about your idea. I'd like to get Tim Story involved.'"

Tim Story, an A-list Hollywood producer and director, first made a name for himself with the comedy hit *Barbershop*. He was in Canada directing *Fantastic Four* when he got the call from McIlvain. "He gave me a one-sentence pitch," says Story. "I was already familiar with David E. Talbert's previous work. I was sold immediately because it was in the same vein as *Uptown Saturday Night*, *Soul Food* and *Barbershop*. I love those stories."

So does Talbert. "Those Poitier-Cosby films were my favorites," he says. "I always wanted to make a new version of *Uptown Saturday Night* where a straight man and a funny one are thrust into the most unthinkable caper that they then have to pull off."

The idea of setting the film in a church made Story laugh out loud. "I grew up in the church, and I know there was always this building fund that they just kept raising money for. At some point you go, 'okay, they've got to have \$2 billion by now.' It made sense to me as soon as he said it, for guys to think that they could rob the building fund."

The church setting was a natural for Talbert, a "PK" (pastor's kid) whose great grandmother, grandmother, mother, father and uncle were all preachers. "The church experience is a part of the fiber of who I am," he says. "I wanted to honor the legacy of the millions of people raised in storefront churches, and the colorful characters who inhabit them today."

Against this backdrop, Talbert created a second, more serious story. "I also wanted this film to be about a father and son," says Talbert. "How far would a father go to protect his child and keep him near him? We explore that notion with Durrell and Durrell Jr. I grew up in inner city Black America in a lineage of fatherless households. So I thought it was very important to show a father taking responsibility and willing to fight for his son, although a little misguidedly, as Durrell does in the film."

The producers quickly put together a team of experts to guide the first-time filmmaker through his transition from stage to screen. "In David's case, we had somebody who had never really been in the movie business," says McIlvain. "What he brought to the table that makes him effective as a director is experience in working with actors and doing live theater for twelve years. It was necessary for him to get people to help transform him from a playwright to screenwriter."

Talbert is grateful for the seasoned film professionals who helped him put together a first-rate film. "I really had talented, experienced associates to help raise this story," says Talbert. "David McIlvain helped me develop it. Tim Story took me under his wing and guided me in how to show a story, not just tell it. Screen Gems president Clint Culpepper took me out to 'social' dinners on Saturday nights only to set me up to go over the script page by page by page, which I really appreciated."

Even before a single line of the screenplay was written, Talbert sat down with Story, who served as a producer on the film, to discuss the process of building a film script. "We started by breaking out the structure," recalls Story. "Then Dave went off and did his first draft, brought it back and we just kept working on it."

It was clear to them both that Talbert's strength lay in his knack for creating compelling characters. "One of the films that we talked about a lot was *Barbershop*, in the sense that it captured this neighborhood feel, and it captured the characters," Story says. "That's one thing that he knows like the back of his hand."

The script caught the attention of Ice Cube and Matt Alvarez, producing partners and principals in Cube Vision. "What sparked our interest was David's exploration of what somebody would do to protect his family," says Alvarez. "Durell's been thrown a few curveballs, but at his core, he is really a good guy who wants to do the best thing for his son. He is struggling with many issues that fathers who are having a hard time making ends meet struggle with. This idea was very interesting to us."

Multi-talented actor, filmmaker and musician Ice Cube was also attracted to Durell's plight. "Durell is blinded by his love for his son, whose mother wants to move away with him to another state. He's desperate and at his breaking point," says Cube. "So he gets pulled into LeeJohn's cockamamie schemes, like selling tricked-out wheelchairs and robbing a church to make enough money to keep his son in Baltimore."

The subtle cultural statements made in *First Sunday* also intrigued Cube. "This movie takes place in a church, but it doesn't have to do with religion. It deals with the conscience of the church. At the end of the film, Durell and LeeJohn redeem the church and the church redeems them," explains Cube.

Talbert was excited to have Cube play Durell because, as he says, "Cube represents every man from the inner city. He naturally has this internal fury coupled with a gentleness that is Durell. It's Cube's ability to effortlessly toggle between the two worlds that makes Durell a multi-dimensional character."

Knowing that Cube and Alvarez had shepherded the work of other fledgling directors, including Story, through the development and production process was also attractive to Talbert. "Cube and Matt have taken many directors to the promised land," says Talbert. "Matt Alvarez fought to surround me with the best cast and crew. His sensibilities are dead on. Cube is a gifted actor and was a generous directing coach for me during the filming process."

The Cube Vision duo enjoys working with new filmmakers, but Alvarez is quick to point out that with his extensive stage experience, Talbert was no newcomer to dramatic storytelling and working with actors. "First-time directors are typically very collaborative, which we really like," says Alvarez. "Dave Talbert is directing his first feature, but he has written and mounted several plays. He has great instincts, a fantastic

rapport with actors and an inherent trust in what he can deliver to the audience, in addition to being very collaborative. He's the real deal."

Talbert says the production of *First Sunday* took a village of people to realize. "As the director, you get all the credit and all the blame, but without the input I received, I would not have been able to transition from a playwright and a theater director to a filmmaker," he says. "It's been the most amazing creative experience of my life. I feel like everything I've been doing the last 15 years on stage and in novels prepared me for this. This film is my thesis. And everything I do will change as a result."

## **ABOUT THE CASTING**

With the completed script in hand, the filmmakers were ready to cast the film. Ice Cube had always been their first choice for the role of Durell. "He is so incredible on many levels, not just as an actor, which he has definitely grown into tremendously," says Tim Story. "He has a range that I think people don't always realize. He just gets the process of filmmaking."

David McIlvain says that while Cube's star power is likely to bring an audience into the film, his ability to balance comedy and drama will be the key to its ultimate success. "He's one of the few actors who can really do that well," says the producer. "Some of the dramatic scenes he does will take you back to *Three Kings* and *Boyz n the Hood*, where his career began."

David E. Talbert was determined not to cast what he calls "the usual suspects" in *First Sunday*. I wanted to put together an eclectic group of people that you would never see in one film. Each one brings his or her own sensibility to it, their own style, their own flavor. And then at the end of the day, what you have is like a gumbo, where in every spoonful you're not going to find the same thing, but it's going to taste good."

"When I wrote the script, I had Tracy Morgan in mind to play LeeJohn," says Talbert of the actor, a series regular on the Emmy® award winning NBC show "30 Rock." "This character, although very funny, has the back story of growing up in foster homes and having the church turn its back on him. Tracy, like Richard Pryor or Robin Williams, has the depth to make us laugh to keep from crying himself."

Story says that as soon as he saw Cube and Morgan interact, he knew they had found the right actor to play LeeJohn.

"Immediately, it was gold. Cube is such a great straight guy and Tracy just gives you all this comedic energy. The cool thing about it is, he's also an excellent actor. His dramatic scenes are downright emotional."

Morgan says LeeJohn's metamorphosis in the film was his way into the character. "LeeJohn is a caterpillar-he's crawling at first, while the other characters are soaring. But

he's crawling to a cocoon, which is the church. God is going to work on him. And when he comes out of the cocoon, he becomes a beautiful person."

To cast Rickey, First Hope's eccentric choir director, the filmmakers looked no further than Katt Williams, coming off the massive success of his HBO special, "The Pimp Chronicles Pt. 1." "He's one of the hottest comedians in the business today," says Alvarez. First Sunday marked the actor's second outing on a Cube Vision film, having made his screen debut in the role of Money Mike in Friday After Next.

Williams describes Rickey as "a really fly choir director" who is completely immersed in his job. "Everything else that exists in his life is merely a function of directing the choir," says the actor. "And that's why he's fun to watch."

To give Rickey a unique style to mirror his signature personality, Williams wears a flamboyant wig, which Talbert describes as "a cross between Prince and Little Richard."

Talbert emphasizes how important the choir director is in an African American church. "Rickey has a license to say anything to anybody. In most churches, especially a Black church, the music has as much power as the pastor. As many people are coming to hear the music as are coming to hear 'the word,' so this is Rickey's universe."

Tim Story calls Williams "one of those guys who could be making a peanut butter-and-jelly sandwich and it's just funny. Hopefully, the laughs aren't so big you don't hear what he's saying next, because Katt is truly a gift to this film."

Knowing he had gifted comedians like Williams and Morgan in the cast, Talbert encouraged improvisation throughout the shoot. "Because Tracy and Katt are so quick, I liked to start with what's scripted, and then lock the camera on them and keep feeding them ideas, giving them room to roam," says Talbert.

For instance, in the crucial courtroom scene in which LeeJohn and Durell are sentenced to 5,000 hours of community service, the director told Morgan to really cut loose. "When LeeJohn is being dragged out, I said 'Wipe out everything on your way,'" says Talbert. "And he did. And then I said, 'Keep screaming on your way out the door.' And he screamed some very funny unscripted lines that ended up in the film. For a director, there's no better gift than for a comedian to trust you with his instrument."

Morgan appreciated Talbert's artistic guidance and freedom. "I love Dave Talbert. He's like Vince Lombardi in that he inspires me. He isn't trying to create the magic, he just wants to capture it. He lets the funny happen."

Williams' virtuosity at improvisation is on display in the scene in which Rickey is interrogated by Durell about the missing money. "Katt is like a comedy machine gun. He can rattle off joke after joke. So, especially in this scene, we started with the script and went from there," recalls Talbert.

Producer and star Ice Cube was happy to play the straight man and give his co-stars the creative space to bring out the comedy in the situation. "I think it's important not to try and be something I'm not. I let Tracy and Katt, who are naturally funny-with lines, without lines, with ad libs, with physical comedy-be funny. I want to be sure I'm pitching straight and I know they'll knock `em out of the park."

The filmmakers assembled an impressive ensemble cast of dramatic actors to play the church members who become Durell and LeeJohn's hostages in First Sunday.

Acclaimed film, television and stage actress Loretta Devine plays Sister Doris, the secretary of the church. "For that character, we were trying to find that soul that you just love immediately," Talbert says. "I mean, as soon as she walks on the screen, you just love her. Loretta Devine is one of those actors. We wanted a strong cast to surround Cube. And you know, you can't get stronger than that. No matter when you throw the ball to her, she's going to slam dunk it."

Talbert says he actually had Devine in mind several years before filming began. "David and I met for dinner a couple of times and talked about my character," says Devine. "And then he did some rewrites and we talked some more."

Talbert was so excited about the prospect of Devine in his film that he enlarged her part. "Loretta is an icon and rightly so," says Talbert. "And she breathes new life into any role you give her. So once she came on board, I expanded her role. And then she elevated it even further."

"I wanted Sister Doris to have more depth," says Devine. And Talbert responded with one of the film's most sensitive scenes, in which Sister Doris sings "Happy Birthday" to LeeJohn, who had never celebrated his birthday before because of his unsettled upbringing.

It was a critical scene for his character as well, says Morgan. "LeeJohn gets to show a full range of emotion here. And this is probably the first time I'm ever getting to do that. And it's opposite Loretta Devine. It's a treat for me."

Chi McBride plays Pastor Mitchell, the church's stolid, paternal leader. "Chi reminds me of my uncle who was an assistant pastor. Chi's stature and presence anchor the church like a pastor should," says Talbert.

McBride settled comfortably into the role. "I've seen a thousand preachers in my life. And I think this portrayal is probably an aggregate of all of them," he says.

Talbert gave Pastor Mitchell a very personal touch, too. "David had me wear a beautiful sash in the scene where I'm giving the sermon. It belonged to his grandmother, who also was a minister," says McBride.

For Tianna, the preacher's daughter, the filmmakers selected Malinda Williams. "Not only is Malinda beautiful, but she has the fire and passion to stand up to Durell and the

deacon of the church," says Talbert. "We wanted Tianna to seem, on the outside, as if you don't have to worry about her. But she's actually the person that Cube's got to worry about the most."

At the center of one of the film's key subplots is a very basic dispute between Tianna and the Deacon about what the church stands for. "The Deacon would like to spend the money the church brings in on more extravagant things, like building a new church in a better neighborhood," says Williams. "Tianna has an activist spirit. She would like to see the church's funds go back to its own community."

Playing a church leader came quite naturally to Williams. "Although I'm not a preacher's kid, I was pretty much in church three to four days a week, growing up with my mother. So I drew from my own experience to inform this character," says Williams.

Williams also drew on her real-life feelings for the subtle romantic spark that ignites between Tianna and Durell while he holds the church members hostage. "I had a crush on Cube when I was growing up," she admits. "I knew all the lyrics to his songs, and I'm a big fan of his music, particularly 'America's Most Wanted.' This crush motivated and inspired me to make a connection with Cube in the same way Tianna discovers a way to connect with Durell."

The filmmakers chose respected dramatic actor Michael Beach for the pivotal role of the Deacon. "The Deacon is the businessman of the church," says Beach. "He highlights its non-spiritual side.

"Although First Sunday is a comedy, it is also about a lot of serious things," according to Beach. "It has bite. It has character. And the Deacon highlights one of the important questions in the film. 'Do you forsake the community for the perceived betterment of the church itself, or is the church there to better the community?'"

Beach added unexpected spice to Talbert's gumbo. "Michael Beach brought another layer to this character that I would have never foreseen," says the director.

Veteran actress Olivia Cole, who has the distinction of being the first African-American actress to win an Emmy® Award for Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Television Movie for her portrayal of Mathilda, wife of Chicken George in the esteemed television miniseries "Roots," plays Momma T, the most patrician member of the hostages.

Talbert cast Cole because of her innate nobility. "Olivia emanates dignity and spirituality," says Talbert. "For me, it's like she's channeling my great grandmother, who was a pastor."

The classically trained actress, a graduate of London's elite Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, really got a kick out of working with her more self-taught co-stars. "I'm doing scenes with great comedians, Tracy Morgan and Katt Williams, and a great rap artist, Ice Cube,"

says Cole. "And I love how we're all blending as a cast, a comedy and a community in this film. It has really been a rich experience for me."

Rounding out the cast are radio host and comedian Rickey Smiley in a hilarious turn as parishioner Bernice Jenkins, C.J. Sanders as Durell Jr., in his sophomore role after portraying the young Ray Charles in *Ray*, Regina Hall as Durell Jr.'s mother Omunique, and Clifton Powell and Nicholas Turturro as Officers King and D'Agostino, respectively.

Ice Cube has high praise for director Talbert's ability to draw out the best in the talented cast. "Dave's strong point is getting the actors to deliver the performances he wants and envisions. He has the tempo of acting, whether it's comedic or dramatic, down," says Cube.

Talbert is quick to return the compliment. "They call me an actor's director, because I come from stage performance," says Talbert. "But Ice Cube is a director's actor; he adds value to the director. He coached me in sidebars, scene by scene. I'm used to blocking a proscenium stage where everyone is facing down here. He helped me realize that it doesn't matter where you place people, because the camera will always find them. He allowed my learning curve as a first-time director. But when it comes to directing him to get the performance, he honors the fact that I know performance from the core of my soul."

## **SETTING THE SCENE**

Director David E. Talbert decided to set *First Sunday* in Baltimore because it's a city he knows well, having attended Morgan State University there. "Baltimore is one of those cities that has been forgotten," says the director. "It's plagued with crime and violence. But there is so much beauty in the 'hood that you never hear about. Like, you never hear about a father walking his son to the bus every day. So in the midst of its chaos and confusion, there is still love in the ghetto. God's still got love for the ghetto. And I wanted to show that."

Because *First Sunday* was shot in Los Angeles, production designer Dina Lipton had to recreate Talbert's vision of Baltimore locally. The First Hope Church, which is the setting for much of the action as well as a central character in the script, was the first priority for the director and the designer.

"David showed me hundreds of photos he'd taken of Baltimore and I used them all as my guide," says Lipton. After scouting numerous areas in Los Angeles, Lipton found the perfect locale in Long Beach's Christian Outreach in Action Church. "Its faade is brick, which says Baltimore to me," she says. "And there are no iconic Los Angeles palm trees in sight to give the city away."

The interior of the church needed minor alterations to fit the filmmakers' vision of First Hope's sanctuary. "Most comedies have a bright, colorful glossy look," says Ice Cube.

"But we wanted the look and feel of a hot, gritty Baltimore church that had warmth about it, too. Because it's a character in the film, the church starts to mess with my character, Durell. It reminds him of the good qualities he should be pulling out of himself, instead of the bad ones."

Cinematographer Alan Caso collaborated with Lipton on colors for the sanctuary that would create the organic feel that the producers and director were looking for. "I wanted to shoot this movie straight and true, like its characters," says Caso. "You take the shadows where they are. You take the dirt where it is, and you take the beauty of people who struggle every day just to make ends meet."

Production designer Lipton adds, "The walls were originally painted white, which is very bright photographically. With an African-American cast, the risk is that the walls would be brighter than the actors, so we toned them down to a soft beige. This gave it warmth as well as a feeling of age."

The director was precise about the details he wanted for the sanctuary interior. "David has great visual style," says Lipton. "He was very specific in wanting the monochromatic church dotted with burgundy accents. I think it was reminiscent of his own church growing up."

"From day one, David wanted to have a mural dominate the sanctuary's main wall, and he had us look up several murals from his memory," says Lipton. "They turned out not to be exactly what he wanted, so we spent a long time designing ours, because it was going to be the background for all the sanctuary scenes."

The result is an imposing 15 by 15 foot mural by artist Gabrielle McKenna-McGraham. "I wanted it to tell a story without having to add much text. I wanted it to represent the pain and hope of the faces of the community," says Talbert.

The mural includes a father holding a baby, a mother holding a baby, an older woman reading from a Bible to a little boy, a man working the soil, and an elderly man whose face shows the years of toil and dedication.

"One of the things I think is important throughout the film is that our characters have a lot of pain, but that they are also good people," says Lipton. "Our mural mirrors that. And in the end, when the entire community does come out and support the church, it's a reflection of the mural again."

"David and I are so happy with the way it turned out," the production designer continues. "It's such a subtle reminder of what we're trying to say. And Long Beach's Christian Outreach in Action Church is also overjoyed with it. They are keeping it in their church."

Cube was on hand to give Talbert support and some collegial advice during the church shoot. "Cube was invaluable to me when it came to blocking the sanctuary scenes."

Because of my previous experience directing theater, I was focused on the fourth wall, the audience. Cube advised me on looking at the scene from 360 degrees," says Talbert.

After several weeks of filming in Long Beach, the production moved to Highland Park, using Faith United Presbyterian Church to film scenes set in Pastor Mitchell's office and the church basement.

"I think we've melded both locations seamlessly for our First Hope Church," says Lipton. "Although, in reality, we were in the sanctuary of one church, walked down the hallway, and then were in a completely different place."

The filmmakers even modified a real Los Angeles institution, Roscoe's House of Chicken and Waffles, for Durell and LeeJohn's diner hangout. "David said to me, 'I want a greasy spoon diner without a counter; one that's friendly looking and welcoming-you know, like Roscoe's,'" says Lipton. "So Roscoe's was redressed and transformed into the Eat All Night Diner."

And finally, what would a film about a church, fatherhood, brotherhood, pain and redemption be without hand-clapping music? David E. Talbert, whose soundtrack to his eighth play, "His Woman, His Wife," skyrocketed to the top of Billboard's inspirational album charts, knows a lot about gospel music. To this end, the filmmaker brought in famed producer/composer Kurt Carr to recreate his hit song "The Presence of the Lord is Here" to be sung by the choir when Durell and LeeJohn first enter First Hope Church.

Producer Tim Story refers to the movie as a "dramedy," a blend of humor and poignancy that will make audiences laugh and maybe even shed a tear or two. "Emotionally, this movie pretty much gives you everything you're looking for in a film. There are some areas in this film that are just flat-out funny, but the jokes aren't created and set up and ba-da-bing-bam, there's a punch line. I can't wait for audiences to see it, because it's definitely there."

A comedy with its heart definitely in the right place, "First Sunday is a humor-filled drama mixed with my own brand of inspiration," says Talbert.

## **ABOUT THE CAST**

As head of the production company Cube Vision, ICE CUBE (Durell Washington) has written, produced, and starred in the cult hit Friday and its successful sequels, Next Friday and Friday After Next. Cube Vision was also responsible for The Players Club, in which Cube made his directorial debut. He also starred in and executive produced the back-to-back box office hits Barbershop and Barbershop 2: Back in Business. In Are We Done Yet?, Cube again starred as Nick Persons, a role he created in Revolution Studios' sleeper-hit family comedy Are We There Yet?, which he also produced through Cube Vision.

His other film credits include the critically acclaimed *Three Kings*, opposite George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg, *Trespass* and *Higher Learning*. Cube made his feature film debut in John Singleton's classic *Boyz n the Hood*.

Cube continues to be one of the most recognized hip-hop artists in the recording industry. His thriving music career includes the double-platinum success of Volumes 1 and 2 of his double album, "War and Peace." As a solo artist, Cube has recorded such hit albums as "Lethal Injection," "Bootlegs & B-Sides," "The Predator," and "Amerikkka's Most Wanted." His collaborative effort with Mack-10 and WC formed the group Westside Connection, whose second album, "Terrorist Threats," was released in December 2003 and marks the follow-up effort to their 1996 double-platinum seller, "Bow Down." A collection of Ice Cube's greatest hits, featuring two new songs, was released by Priority Records in December 2001.

KATT WILLIAMS (Rickey) is known as much for his permed hair as for his animated performances and quick wit. Williams began paving his path to Hollywood over a decade ago. At an age when most teenagers are eagerly anticipating getting their drivers' licenses, the young comic quickly discovered that he had a gift for making people laugh. Inspired by the likes of great humorists such as Richard Pryor, Eddie Murphy, Bill Cosby, George Carlin, Whoopi Goldberg, and Dave Chappelle, Williams' incomparably acerbic standup routines are laying the blueprint for a new generation of comics. He is currently wrapping up his 100-city "The Pimp Chronicles Tour," selling out theaters in every major market across the country. Recently, he was also added to the very short list of comedians to earn the honor of performing at Radio City Music Hall; he promptly sold out those two dates as well.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio and raised in Dayton, Williams was the product of a socially and politically charged household. At the age of 13, longing to express his creative side, he emancipated himself from his parents and moved to Florida, where he sold flowers and magazines on the side of the road. He honed his skills during open-mic nights at local clubs, where he could sneak into the venues underage with the only other patrons not asked for I.D. -- the comedians. In 1999, he became a notable presence at The Improv, The Comedy Club and The Icehouse, and he had his own room at The Hollywood Park Casino.

Williams also won Cedric the Entertainer's Anheuser-Busch Best Los Angeles Comics Award that year. Since then, he has performed stand-up on many shows, such as "Comedy Campus," BET's "Comic View," both the 2005 and 2006 BET Comedy Awards, The 2006 Def Comedy Jam, and several late-night talk shows including "The Late Show with David Letterman" and "The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson."

In 2006, Code Black Entertainment released Williams' HBO special, "Katt Williams: Pimp Chronicles Part 1." Taped live in Atlanta, the show featured guest appearances from Cam'ron, Lil' Jon, Snoop Dogg, Andre 3000 and Anthony Anderson. The highest-rated comedy special to air on the network in the previous two years, it garnered 3.6 million

viewers and has since gone triple platinum in DVD sales. The follow up, Pimp Chronicles Part 2, will be released theatrically.

On the big screen, Williams was seen in the comedy Norbit for Paramount Pictures, opposite Eddy Murphy. He is also featured in the independent feature A Perfect Christmas, starring Queen Latifah and Terrence Howard, and as Money Mike in Friday After Next, starring Ice Cube.

Williams also conquered the land of television comedy on Nick Cannon's MTV improv series "Wild 'N' Out," and graced several hit television shows with cameo appearances. Some of these shows include "NYPD Blue," UPN's "Girlfriends," "The Tracy Morgan Show," "My Wife and Kids," as well as the popular adult cartoon "The Boondocks," for which he provided the voice of an animated pimp named Slickback. Williams wrote for and appeared on "Nick Cannon Presents: Short Circuitz" and has contributed to music videos for many musical groups and performers, from OutKast and Ludacris to E-40 and Lil' Kim.

In addition to television, film, and stand-up, his debut rap album, "It's Pimpin, Pimpin," was released in 2007 by Cam'ron's Diplomat label and features Snoop Dogg, E-40, Da Brat and Lil' John. In 2006, Williams brought his comedic genius to the stage as the host of the BET Hip Hop Awards in Atlanta. His self-created "Money Mike Pimp Phone Ringing" ringtone remains the most downloaded on Urban World Wireless.

Williams currently resides in Los Angeles with his eight children.

TRACY MORGAN (LeeJohn Jackson) plays the wild and unpredictable movie star Tracy Jordan in the NBC comedy series "30 Rock." As a standup comic who headlined across the country, Morgan was introduced to TV audiences as Hustleman on the hit comedy series "Martin." Morgan joined "Saturday Night Live" in 1996 and spent seven seasons creating memorable characters, including Astronaut Jones and Brian Fellows. After leaving "Saturday Night Live," Morgan went on to star in his own comedy series "The Tracy Morgan Show" and as the voice of Spoonie Luv on Comedy Central's "Crank Yankers."

Morgan's feature film credits include The Longest Yard, Little Man, Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back and Head of State.

Equally at home on stage or on screen, LORETTA DEVINE (Sister Doris McPherson) has created some of the most memorable roles in theatre, film and television. The award-winning actress first captured national attention in the role of Lorrell, one of the three original "Dreamgirls" in Michael Bennett's classic Broadway musical of the same name. Devine also made a cameo in the recent film version, as well.

Devine graduated from the University of Houston and later received a Master of Fine Arts in Theater Arts from Brandeis University. She followed her Broadway run in "Dreamgirls" with a fiery performance in Bob Fosse's critically acclaimed stage

production, "Big Deal." Subsequent work in George C. Wolfe's "Colored Museum" and "Lady Day at Emerson Bar and Grill" cemented Devine's status as one of our most talented and versatile stage actresses.

Film roles soon followed, including a poignant turn as a single mother opposite Whitney Houston, Angela Bassett and Gregory Hines in *Waiting to Exhale*, which earned her a NAACP Image Award for Best Supporting Actress. Devine also won an NAACP Image Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance in Penny Marshall's *The Preacher's Wife*. She received an Independent Spirit Award for Best Supporting Actress for her work in *Women Thou Art Loosed* and was featured in the Academy Award®-winning film *Crash*.

Additional film credits include appearances in the successful *Urban Legend* franchise, *I Am Sam* (opposite Michelle Pfeiffer and Sean Penn), *Kingdom Come*, *What Women Want*, *Punks*, *Hoodlums*, *Down in the Delta* and *Stanley and Iris*. Devine also appeared in *Sticky Fingers*, *Amos and Andrew*, *The Breaks*, *The Price of Kissing*, *Lover Girl*, *Class Act*, *Living Large*, *Caged Fear* and *Little Nikita*. She recently starred in Sony/Screen Gems' holiday release, *This Christmas* and the independent film *Dirty Laundry*.

On television, Devine is currently featured in the hit ABC medical drama "Grey's Anatomy." She received three NAACP Image Awards for her role on David E. Kelley's Fox series, "Boston Public." Additional credits include series roles in "A Different World" and Lifetime Television's "Wild Card." Devine also provided the voice of Muriel Stubbs on the beloved cartoon, "The PJs." Devine currently resides in Los Angeles.

MICHAEL BEACH (Deacon Randy) is an accomplished actor on stage and screen. He is perhaps best known for his menacing turn in Carl Franklin's acclaimed crime-drama *One False Move* or as Angela Bassett's cheating husband in *Waiting to Exhale*. His future projects include *Hell Ride*, starring opposite Dennis Hopper, Michael Madsen and Vinnie Jones, and *Play Dead*, with Chris Klein and Fred Durst.

Beach trained for the theater at the Juilliard School in New York City. While at Juilliard, Michael performed in more than 18 plays. He also wrote and directed a few. He's performed off Broadway, in regional theater and in theater in Los Angeles.

Two weeks after graduation, Beach was playing opposite Wesley Snipes in *Streets of Gold*, then alongside Kevin Bacon in *End of the Line*, also starring Holly Hunter. A string of films followed, including *Suspect* with Cher and Dennis Quaid, *Lean on Me* with Morgan Freeman, *In a Shallow Grave* and *Late for Dinner*.

In James Cameron's *The Abyss*, he found a watery grave, then was engulfed in feathers after being shot in Tony Scott's *True Romance*, and shot again when Andy Garcia and Richard Gere used him against each other in *Internal Affairs*. Bill Paxton also gets the best of his outlaw character, Pluto, in the critical success *One False Move*.

Beach's other film credits include *Bad Company*, with Laurence Fishburne and Ellen Barkin; *White Man's Burden*, with John Travolta; *Waiting to Exhale*, opposite Whitney Houston and Angela Bassett; *Soul Food*, starring Vanessa Williams; and *A Family Thing*, with Robert Duvall and James Earl Jones.

In addition to his work in film Beach has numerous television credits, which include appearances on "Criminal Minds," "Without a Trace," "Shark," *Brothers & Sisters*," "Third Watch," "Stargate: Atlantis," "Spawn," "Open Admissions" with Jane Alexander, "Shannon's Deal" (a series created by John Sayles), "Gabriel's Fire" and recurring roles in "Under Suspicion" and "ER."

Beach also starred in "Rebound: The Legend of Earl 'The Goat' Manigault," an HBO telefilm directed by Eriq La Salle and featuring Forest Whitaker, Don Cheadle and James Earl Jones.

KEITH DAVID (Judge B. Bennett Galloway) Very few actors working today possess David's extraordinary range of talent as evidenced by his body of work. Recent films include *Delta Farce*, *ATL*, and *Crash*. Other credits include *Barbershop*, *Agent Cody Banks*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *There's Something About Mary*, *Armageddon* and *Dead Presidents*.

On television, David served as the narrator for the widely praised Ken Burns documentary "The War," which aired on PBS. Earlier, David had an arc of episodes on "ER." He won an Emmy® Award for his narration of the documentary "Unforgiveable Blackness," and was nominated for his narration of "Jazz." He received a daytime Emmy® nomination for his work on Showtime's "The Tiger Woods Story." David also narrated "Horatio's Drive" and "Mark Twain." David was the lead character on the animated series based on the comic book *Spawn* for HBO, as well as the lead in the Disney animated series "Gargoyles," for which he also received an Emmy® nomination. He is currently the voice of the U.S. NAVY and has narrated the hit A&E series "City Confidential."

REGINA HALL (Omunique) was last seen in David Zucker's *Scary Movie 4*, reprising the role of Brenda, whom she played in all three previous installments of the comedy spoof franchise. She also starred in Marius Balchunas' independent film *The Optimist*, opposite Shane West, and Ariel Vromen's independent film *Danika*, opposite Marisa Tomei.

Hall's other film credits include John Schultz's *The Honeymooners*, alongside Cedric the Entertainer, Mike Epps and Gabrielle Union; Jeff Byrd's *King's Ransom*, opposite Anthony Anderson; John Whitesell *Malibu's Most Wanted*, with Jamie Kennedy, Taye Diggs and Blair Underwood; Gina Prince-Blythewood's *Love & Basketball*, opposite Omar Epps, Sanaa Lathan and Alfre Woodard; Malcolm D. Lee's *The Best Man*, starring Taye Diggs, Sanaa Lathan and Nia Long; and Charles Stone's *Paid in Full*, with Mekhi Phifer, Chi McBride and Kevin Carroll.

On the small screen, Hall starred opposite Wesley Snipes and Sanaa Lathan in Gina Prince's "Disappearing Acts" for HBO Films, a love story based on the book by Terry McMillan. She also starred as Coretta Lipp on David E. Kelley's critically acclaimed show, "Ally McBeal." Hall first appeared in the spring of 2001 for a three-episode arc as the junior associate to Larry Paul, played by Robert Downey Jr. Based on her successful stint, Hall signed onto "Ally" as a season regular for the 2001-2002 season. Other television credits include appearances on "NYPD Blue" and "New York Undercover."

MALINDA WILLIAMS (Tianna Mitchell) recently starred in Tyler Perry's Daddy's Little Girls. In 2005, Williams starred in the Outkast film, Idlewild (Universal), which was her first starring role in a major musical production. Williams also starred on the NBC television drama "Windfall" as Kimberly George, a 22 year-old single mother who won a \$386 million dollar lottery and left her life in the trailer park behind.

For five years, Williams portrayed Tracey "Bird" Van Adams, a beauty salon owner and struggling entrepreneur on Showtime's groundbreaking, history-making series "Soul Food." In 2003 and 2004 she earned an NAACP Image Award nomination for "Outstanding Actress in a Drama Series," and in 2002, 2003 and 2004 the series received the NAACP Image Award for "Outstanding Drama Series" as well as another nomination in 2004.

Her film credits include leading roles in The Wood (MTV /Paramount), High School High (TriStar), and An Invited Guest, which won the Best of Show at the 1999 Acapulco Black Film Festival and the Audience Award at the 1999 Urban World Festival in New York. She also starred in the HBO telefilm "Dancing in September." Other film credits include: Sunset Park (Columbia/TriStar) and A Thin Line Between Love and Hate (New Line). Malinda's television credits as a guest star include "The District," "Law and Order: SVU" and "NYPD Blue."

CHI McBRIDE (Pastor Mitchell) has established himself as one of the most respected actors working in television and film today. He is probably best known for his five-year run on the critically acclaimed David E. Kelley series, "Boston Public," starring as Principal Steven Harper. Currently, he can be seen on the ABC series "Pushing Daisies" and appeared in the recent feature Brothers Solomon, directed by Bob Odenkirk and starring opposite Will Arnett and Will Forte. Prior to that, McBride collaborated with Odenkirk and Arnett on the Universal release Let's Go to Prison. In 2006, he starred on the critically acclaimed ABC drama series "The Nine."

Other feature film credits include the Touchstone film, Annapolis, starring opposite James Franco and Tyrese; Waiting, with Ryan Reynolds; Roll Bounce, starring opposite Bow Wow and Nick Cannon; Steven Spielberg's The Terminal, with Tom Hanks; I, Robot, starring alongside Will Smith; Narc, with Ray Liotta; Paid in Full, alongside Wood Harris and Mekhi Phifer; Undercover Brother, opposite Eddie Griffin; Gone in 60 Seconds, with Nicholas Cage; and The Kid, co-starring with Bruce Willis. McBride played starring roles in The Frighteners, Hoodlum and Mercury Rising. He also received

critical acclaim for his starring role in the Hudlin Brothers' production, "Tang," a segment of HBO's "Cosmic Slop Trilogy."

McBride made his feature film debut in *The Distinguished Gentleman*, opposite Eddie Murphy, and followed with roles in the Oscar®-nominated *What's Love Got to Do With It* and *The Great White Hype*.

Additional TV roles include a five-episode arc on "House," playing Bundini Brown in ABC's telefilm "Muhammad Ali: King of the World," plus appearances on "Killer Instinct" and "Deviant Behavior." McBride is also well known for his role as the wisecracking, philosophical janitor on "The John Larroquette Show."

## **ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS**

Considering his portfolio of high-profile accomplishments, there is not a box big enough to contain the creative voice of multi-award winning writer, director and producer DAVID E. TALBERT (Writer/Director/Producer).

He was hand-picked to write and produce an NBC special for Academy Award® winner Jamie Foxx, collaborated with hip-hop icon Snoop Dogg on a best-selling novel, launched record-breaking stage tours of his plays (including his latest, "Love In The Nick Of Tyme," starring Morris Chestnut), created a reality show for TV-One entitled David E. Talbert's StageBlack, and wrote and produced *First Sunday*, his feature film directorial debut.

Born the great-grandson of a Pentecostal preacher, Talbert's roots run deep in the business of hope and inspiration. For more than 15 years, Talbert has been one of the highest grossing and most recognizable brands in urban inspirational musicals and comedies. His 12 blockbuster plays, which include "Love on Lay-Away," "He Say She Say," "The Fabric of a Man," "His Woman His Wife," "Mr. Right Now," "Love Makes Things Happen," "A Fool and His Money," "Tellin' It Like It `Tiz!," "What Goes Around...Comes Around," "Talk Show Live," "Lawd Ha' Mercy" and "Love in the Nick of Tyme," have been seen by an amazing 2.5 million fans. His work has received an astounding 24 NAACP Award nominations, and won five, including Best Playwright for "The Fabric of a Man."

The soundtrack to Talbert's eighth play, "His Woman His Wife," skyrocketed to the Top 20 on Billboard's inspirational album charts. Talbert's debut novel, *Baggage Claim*, became an instant national bestseller, climbing to #2 on the "Essence" bestseller list. In home video, Talbert pioneered the concept of inspirational plays on DVD by making by his seventh play, "Mr. Right Now," the first ever available. His plays are now enjoyed on DVD in over 20 countries, spanning four continents.

A graduate of Morgan State University, Talbert earned his Bachelors degree in marketing. He later attended New York University, where he enrolled in its accelerated

film program. Talbert's plays continue to tour the country, and he and cast faithfully visit and lecture at high schools and colleges, creating mentor programs and inspiring the next generation of artists, actors and producers.

DAVID McILVAIN (Producer) began his career as a literary agent at Major Clients Agency before joining Michael Ovitz's management company Artists Management Group in 2001. AMG merged with The Firm in 2004 and McIlvain remained with the company until December 2006. While there, he represented writers and directors but also executive produced *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*.

McIlvain is currently a manager at Brillstein-Grey Entertainment. His clients include David E. Talbert, Scott Derrickson and Paul Boardman, who wrote, directed, and produced *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, as well as Jill Soloway (co-executive producer, *"Six Feet Under"*), and The Hughes Brothers (directors of *Menace II Society*, *Dead Presidents* and *From Hell*).

TIM STORY (Producer) has proven himself an adept storyteller with films that combine compassion and humor infused with adrenaline. Story's unique insights into people's real flaws and quirks, along with his passion for telling stories and character development, allow him to bring a wide range of human emotions to the big screen.

A fan of the "The Fantastic Four" comics for life, Story jumped at the chance to helm the film adaptations. The recent release, *Fantastic Four 2: Rise of the Silver Surfer* is the successful sequel to 20th Century Fox's July 2005 blockbuster *Fantastic Four* and starred Jessica Alba, Michael Chiklis, Chris Evans and Julian McMahon.

Story is an executive producer for the Fox Television series "Standoff." Ron Livingston stars in this hour-long drama about an FBI crisis negotiation unit with its own share of interpersonal and romantic problems.

MGM released Story's acclaimed feature studio debut, *Barbershop*, in September 2002. Starring Ice Cube, Anthony Anderson, Cedric the Entertainer, Troy Garity and Eve, the film was a box-office hit spawning a sequel, a spin-off film, and a television series.

Prior to *Barbershop*, Story completed two feature-length films which he wrote, directed, produced, edited and even financed himself -- *The Firing Squad* and *One of Us Tripped*. *One of Us Tripped* was the winner of the Black Filmmaker's Hall of Fame Film Festival.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Story was introduced to filmmaking at an early age. At age 12, he inherited an 8mm camera from his older brother and realized his passion lay behind the camera. He was often seen around his neighborhood making silent movies and recruiting family and friends to play the characters in his stories.

In high school, Story's love of storytelling gained an additional outlet as he began a career in music, rapping with Ice T's Rhyme Syndicate. Story's rap group, TDF, was in the process of signing a record deal with Warner Bros. Records when a neighborhood

rival fatally shot one of their members. After the tragedy, Story switched creative gears and began producing and directing talent shows and variety musicals. Story dreamed of enrolling in USC's prestigious film program and honing his skills as a filmmaker, which he finally made a reality.

After film school, Story worked at an independent record label where he was able to combine his passion for film and music by directing his first music video. He has since gone on to direct dozens of music videos for such cutting edge acts as N'Sync, Tyrese, and Jon B.

Story and his writing partner Brian Buccellato have completed several screenplays that are currently in development, including *Society Cap* for Tom Hanks' Universal-based company, Playtone.

Story lives in Los Angeles with his family.

MATT ALVAREZ (Producer) has been a partner in Cube Vision with actor, producer and writer Ice Cube since 1998. The company has produced many highly successful films including *Are We There Yet?* and its sequel *Are We Done Yet?*; the *Barbershop* franchise (*Barbershop*, *Barbershop 2*) and *Beauty Shop* for MGM as well as the *Friday* franchise (*Friday*, *Next Friday*, *Friday After Next*) and *All About the Benjamins* for New Line. The company has also ventured into television with the series "Black. White." for FX. Their latest project is the recently announced feature version of *Welcome Back, Kotter*.

Born in Fresno, California and raised in Foster City, Alvarez graduated from the University of California, Davis, where he earned a B.A. in English and Art History. Alvarez got his start as acquisitions and co-productions manager at Fine Line Features, where he oversaw the production of such films as *Mother Night*, starring Nick Nolte, and *Roseanna's Grave*.

Cube Vision signed a three-picture production deal with Revolution Studios in 2003, where they are currently developing the features *Willie*, *Clash*, and *Neighborhood Watch*. Other film projects in development include *Defense*, *Going on Tilt*, and *The Courtship of Eddie's Father*.

Television projects currently in development are an untitled Cohn/Miller one-hour drama for Fox, an animated series for MTV based on the popular *Friday* franchise, and a series for Showtime based on the *Barbershop* franchise. Additionally, they are developing a half-hour drama for HBO about a young hip-hop artist and the music industry entitled "Be Careful What You Wish For."

In addition to his producing responsibilities and overseeing day-to-day operations of Cube Vision, Alvarez is responsible for nurturing new writers and directors, acquiring and developing new music projects, and overseeing the company's expansion into other areas of entertainment.

STACY KOLKER CRAMER (Executive Producer) most recently executive produced the thriller *Vacancy*. She was formerly Senior Vice President of Production at Sony's Screen Gems. During her seven years there, she oversaw the production of *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, starring Laura Linney; *When a Stranger Calls*, directed by Simon West and starring Camilla Belle; *Underworld*, starring Kate Beckinsale; *You Got Served*, starring B2K and *Breaking All the Rules*, starring Jamie Foxx.

Cramer started out in the entertainment business as a publicist for Castle Rock Entertainment, where she worked on *The American President*, starring Michael Douglas, and *The Shawshank Redemption*, starring Morgan Freeman. Cramer graduated cum laude from UCLA with a degree in Psychology. Prior to joining Screen Gems, she was a creative executive at Fox-based Davis Entertainment.

NEIL MACHLIS (Executive Producer) has enjoyed a film career spanning more than 30 years, during which he has emerged as one of the entertainment industry's busiest and most highly respected producers. He's worked with some of the top directors of his generation, including Mike Nichols, Bob Fosse, Ron Howard and Joel Schumacher.

Born and raised in Belle Harbor, New York, Machlis earned a B.A. degree from American University and began his film career at Astra Films in Washington. During the social unrest of the late '60s, Machlis found himself at the 1968 Democratic National Convention filming commentary for the U.S. Senate.

The following year, Machlis moved back to New York and entered the Directors Guild of America's training program as one of only 10 trainees accepted from more than 1,500 applicants. Under the guidance of the program, he began his formal training in filmmaking. He went on to associate produce the hit films *Grease*, *American Gigolo*, *Johnny Dangerously* and *Cujo*, then co-produced *The Monster Squad* before making the leap to executive producing with *Planes*, *Trains and Automobiles*.

Machlis' list of producing credits includes such films as *Are We Done Yet?*, *Zoom*, *Garfield*, *Garfield: A Tale of Two Kitties*, *The Ring Two*, *The Birdcage*, *Dr. Dolittle 2*, *Primary Colors*, *Honeymoon in Vegas*, *Bedazzled*, *What Planet Are You From?*, *I.Q.*, *Lenny* and *Postcards From the Edge*.

RONALD MUHAMMED (Executive Producer) began his career with Ice Cube upon graduating from the Los Angeles Theater Academy in 1990, when an eager young Ronald Riser became Ice Cube's personal assistant. After proving himself an adept team player, he parlayed these skills to become the road manager and tour director for such celebrated music tours as *Steady Mobbin'*, *Predator* and the *Up in Smoke* tour. As Cube made his transition into film, so did Riser, along with his life's convictions. Adopting a new faith, Riser changed his name to Ronald Muhammed and Cube respectfully nicknamed him Brother Ronn or "BR". His responsibilities gradually increased and he became Cube's associate manager in 1995. Through on-set necessity, he acted in *House Party*, *The Player's Club*, *Friday*, and *Next Friday*.

The success of the Friday franchises cemented "Brother Ronn's" place in Hollywood. The third film in the franchise, Friday After Next, was released in the fall of 2002 and Muhammed was a producer on the film.

In 1999, Cube Vision was formed and Muhammed, along with Matt Alvarez, became the driving force behind the company's new movies All About the Benjamins, Barbershop 1 & 2, the chart-topping Are We There Yet? and its sequel Are We Done Yet?. Muhammed also worked closely with Cube on the action-packed Three Kings and XXX: State of the Union.

As head of Firm Films, JULIE YORN (Executive Producer) often has over 30 projects in various stages of development. Recent projects include The Cleaner, starring Samuel L. Jackson and Ed Harris, and 1:30 Train, starring Keira Knightley and Gerard Butler, with Joel Schumacher directing. She also developed "Comanche Moon," a six hour miniseries for CBS written by Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana (Brokeback Mountain), based on McMurtry's novel, and The Christmas Cottage for Lions Gate Films, the first in a series of films inspired by Thomas Kinkade's life and work.

Firm Films had great success with The Exorcism of Emily Rose, starring Laura Linney and Tom Wilkinson. The company represents such film clients as Leonardo DiCaprio, Martin Scorsese and Cameron Diaz, as well as music artists such as Justin Timberlake, Kelly Clarkson and Korn. Firm Films has developed feature projects with DiCaprio, Scorsese and Diaz, as well as with Nicole Kidman, Reese Witherspoon, Rachel Weisz, and Drew Barrymore.

Yorn also produced such films as Trees Lounge, Eve's Bayou, Wonderland, and Come Early Morning, which premiered in competition at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival.

This television season, ALAN CASO, ASC (Director of Photography) has lensed 11 episodes of "Journeyman" for NBC and 10 episodes of "Tell Me You Love Me" for HBO. He recently shot the CBS miniseries "Comanche Moon," the prequel to "Lonesome Dove," and "Blackbeard," a telefilm for Hallmark Entertainment.

Caso learned the basic principles of light, color and composition from his father, who was a photographer for the United States Air Force, a graphic artist and a lithographer. Caso studied painting at Massachusetts College of Art and transferred to the University of Massachusetts, Amherst when his interest shifted to film. After graduation, he moved to Los Angeles and found a niche in the industry as a gaffer during the mid-to-late 1970's. He began camera operating in the late 1970's and went on to master the steadicam, becoming one of the few A-camera operators who also performed steadicam services throughout the 1980's.

Caso shot his first feature, 84 Charlie MoPic, in 1988 and has subsequently compiled over 30 narrative credits for cinema and television screens. He won the ASC Outstanding

Achievement Award in 1997 for the miniseries *George Wallace*, and received an Emmy nomination as well.

His cinema credits range from Muppet movies to John Frankenheimer's stark drama, *Reindeer Games*. Caso created a unique look for HBO with "*Six Feet Under*," for which he received two Emmy nominations, in 2002 and 2003. His work on Stephen Spielberg's "*Into the West*" garnered him his most recent Emmy nomination, as well as distinguishing him in the Western genre.

DINA LIPTON (Production Designer) continues her association with Ice Cube after designing for his previous films *The Players Club* and *Next Friday*. Her other feature film credits include Albert Brooks' *The Muse* and Peter Berg's *Very Bad Things*. She also designed the critically acclaimed television series "*Jack & Bobby*."

Lipton was the art director for such features as *Celtic Pride*, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Corrina, Corrina*, *The Last Seduction* and *Public Eye*.

Born on Long Island, New York, Lipton grew up in Los Angeles. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in set design for theater from the North Carolina School of the Arts. After graduating, she moved to New York City, where she designed off Broadway stage productions. Her focus then moved to the small screen, where she designed many television commercials. Returning to Los Angeles, she art directed two popular daytime dramas before making the transition to feature films.

JEFFREY WOLF, A.C.E. (Editor) is a world-recognized feature film editor who recently edited *Lake City*, an indie starring Sissy Spacek, Rebecca Romijn, Drea de Matteo, Troy Garity and Dave Matthews. He consulted on *Hoot* (2006), based on the 2002 Newbury Award winner for children's fiction by the author Carl Hiaasen. His resume also includes the film *Holes* (2003), based on the 1998 Newbury Award winning novel by Louis Sachar.

Wolf has also collaborated with the iconoclastic film director and artist John Waters on *A Dirty Shame* (2004) and *Cecil B. DeMented* (2000).

During much of his career, Wolf worked as editor and second unit director on the innovative films of the late director Ted Demme, including the smart, dark comedy *The Ref* (1994), and the dramatic, character-driven comedy *Beautiful Girls* (1996). Other Demme films include *Monument Ave.* (1998, aka *Snitch*), *Who's the Man?* (1993) and *Life* (1999). Demme and Wolf collaborated with Jonathan Demme on *Subway Stories* (1997) for HBO. Wolf also edited for legendary filmmaker Arthur Penn on *Four Friends* (1981) and *Penn & Teller Get Killed* (1989). Other great films on Wolf's resume include *Network* (1976), *Mikey and Nicky* (1976), *Baby, It's You* (1983), *Honeysuckle Rose* (1980), *The Godfather Saga* (1984) and *The Wiz* (1978).

Wolf enjoys working in multiple film genres, from the slapstick antics of *Billy Madison* (1995) and the fun and adventure of the cherished childhood favorite *Madeline* (1998), to

the serious *Andre's Mother* (1990) and *Lake City* (2007). His penchant for cutting comedy and drama has helped to create some of the most entertaining films of the last two decades.

In addition to being a member of the Editor's Guild, Wolf has been further recognized by his acceptance into some of the industry's most prestigious organizations, including the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) and the American Cinema Editors (A.C.E.). He has been a "Sight and Sound" course lecturer at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts and has also participated in their highly acclaimed Director's Series program. He has taught an AVID Master Editors Workshop on comedy and was selected as an Artist in Residence for MEW (Manhattan Editors Workshop). Recently, he sat on a panel for the Philadelphia Film Festival on "Storytelling Through Editing."

GERSHA PHILLIPS (Costume Designer) is a costume designer for film and television. Her numerous film credits include *Talk to Me* (Don Cheadle, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Taraji Henson), *A Raisin in the Sun* (Sean Combs, Phylicia Rashad, Audra McDonald, Sanaa Lathan), *Narc* (Ray Liotta, Jason Patric), *Walking Tall* (Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Johnny Knoxville), *Barbershop: The Series* (Omar Gooding), *Are We There Yet?* (Ice Cube, Nia Long), *Owning Mahoney* (Phillip Seymour Hoffman, Minnie Driver), *The Five Senses* (Mary Louise Parker, Philippe Volter), and the made-for-television movie, *"Evel Knievel"* (George Eads, Beau Bridges, Jamie Pressley). Phillips also received a Dora Award nomination for her work on Florence Gibson's stage play, *"Belle."*

Phillips' international eye for fashion is well earned. Born in England to parents of Caribbean and African descent, she and her family moved to Canada when she was only 12 years old. Formally trained in fashion design, Phillips' earliest work experience included creating her own clothing line, organizing fashion shows and visual merchandising for *Le Chateau*, *Fairweathers*, and *Fabricland*. The seed for her current career was planted when she spied the title "Costume Designer" while watching the movie *Beaches'* credits roll by. Beginning as a volunteer for the Canadian Film Center, Phillips graduated from assistant to lead costumer over the course of her first production. Stage works, music videos and photo-shoots quickly followed. She has been moving full steam ahead ever since.

SPRING ASPERS (Music Supervision by) is the Senior Vice President of Soundtracks and Supervision at Island Def Jam music group in Los Angeles. She oversees all Island Def Jam soundtracks, catalog pitching and placement.

Aspers is also an accomplished music supervisor. Some of her work includes *This Christmas*, *Next Friday*, *Stick it*, *Are We There Yet?*, *Alpha Dog*, *Yours Mine and Ours*, and more recently, *License to Wed* and *Lars and the Real Girl*.

KIM TAYLOR-COLEMAN, CSA (Casting by) feature film credits include *"Beauty Shop," "Bringing Down the House," "Ali," "The Last Samurai," "Inside Man," Akeelah and the Bee," "Take the Lead," "Feel the Noise,"* and *"Make it Happen."*

Taylor-Coleman's television credits include original casting for Showtime's *"Sleeper Cell," "Shark," "Everybody Hates Chris,"* and HBO's untitled Kanye West project.

She most recently handled the casting on Spike Lee's next film, "Miracle at St. Anna."