

Vanessa Williams finding her niche as an actress

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

From dethroned Miss America to American Dream Queen. Here's how the scandal-plagued beauty Vanessa Williams battled her way from tabloid-hell to Hollywood's major league. She has a highly acclaimed new album, a slew of must-see movies, a new man and a house full of happy kids, Barbara Sgroi writes in an article in Cosmopolitan magazine.

Suddenly, single supermom Vanessa Williams has wound up exactly where she wants to be. It's been a tough, uphill haul, but at 34, her resume now includes two platinum records, nine Grammy nominations, critical raves for Broadway's "Kiss of the Spider Woman," and Hollywood co-starring roles with the likes of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The former beauty queen's

renewed as the first black _ and first dethroned _ Miss America is finally starting to fade. "I'm simply a survivor," Williams explains.

She has even managed to survive the Hollywood tendency to typecast. Williams played a goddess up to no good in last spring's television miniseries "The Odyssey," an adaptation of the famous Greek epic poem (and fell in love with her current boyfriend, the project's screenwriter, Christopher Solimine, while filming in Turkey).

Last summer, she was a good-hearted nurse in love with Harlem gangster Laurence Fishburne in "Hoodlum." And currently, she plays a ballsy, bitchy, decidedly unglamorous corporate lawyer in the drama "Soul Food."

The multitasking superstar

has just wrapped up her six-month, United States to Japan concert tour and has happily reverted to being a brownie-baking, carpooling, small-town mom to her daughters, Melanie, 10, and Jillian, 8, and son, Devin, 4 at their home about an hour north of New York City.

Now that her career is on a roll and her divorce from Romon Hervey is in the works, she's dealing with the emotional aftermath of life without the man who was her husband, manager, and mentor. Hervey was the Los Angeles publicist she hired to do damage control when nude photos of Williams, reigning Miss American, and another woman turned up in the pages of Penthouse magazine back in 1984.

"I think he was drawn to my vulnerability _ he thought he could help," she says of Hervey,

12 years her senior. "I was only 21 and overwhelmed. All I wanted was someone to take care of me." The scandal cost her the crown, ravaged her reputation, and sent her career into a crash-and-burn tailspin. But on Hervey's advice, Williams doggedly set out to reinvent herself.

"Afterward, I never felt, Oh my God, I'm nothing! My goal was to figure out how to pick up the pieces and get back on track. I knew that I had a future."

Snagging a record deal was easy. It was her image that had been ruined, not her voice, and on radio, that was all that real-

ly counted. Her first album went gold and won three Grammy nominations. Williams had made her comeback.

Having mastered music, Williams set out to steer her career back to her longtime goal: acting. And conquering Broadway, with the starring role in Broadway's "Kiss of the Spider Woman," gave her acting career a push.

"My attitude is, go after what you want," Williams says. "If you get it fine, if not, move on."



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Sounds: Rakim offers fine CD

Continued from 5B

rudeness to women, gang banging or drug running. He's basically promoting his own skills, but that's how rap and That alone is worth the price of admission, let alone his fluid rap style. "The 18th Letter (Always and Forever)" is an edgy, swirling

tune that showcases his wit and skill. "It's Been A Long Time" sounds like something straight out the early '80s, which isn't a bad thing. That's when hip-hop was more original and musical. Welcome back, Rakim.

☆☆☆☆ Classic;
☆☆☆☆ Excellent;
☆☆☆ Good;
☆☆ Fair;
☆ Why?;
No Stars - A mess

Rating:

Rap lyrics raise parents' concern

Continued from 5B

performances have drawn protests in several states.

"I missed an opportunity there; I failed my son as a father," said Kuntz, who lives in Burlington, N.D. "I failed to recognize that my son was holding a hand grenade and that it was going to go off."

The industry's Rosen said the music community is making a positive difference in ways that don't get much attention. Records have been labeled since 1985 so that "parents can make intelligent listening choices for their children," she said.

said violence-laced videos have been shown to make adolescents more antagonistic toward women. "Heavy metal and rap attract kids to their audiences who may be particularly susceptible to influence," Roberts said.

American studies, told reporters that music was a symptom, not a cause.

Outside the hearing room, Michael Eric Dyson, a Columbia University professor of African-

"Until the social injustice that prevails in American society has been dealt with, we will not be able to deal with the substantive issues that cause young people to have despair and to have hopelessness," Dyson said.

Lieberman said the labels should be much more specific and more like video-game and television ratings systems. Rosen said music is too subjective for that.

"What makes one painting good and one painting bad? It's a matter of taste," she said. "You may assume that something is simply in bad taste because you don't like it, but that does not mean that there is not a level of artistic creativity that went into the creation of it."

Rosen said most retailers follow the voluntary guidelines to restrict album sales to people under age 17.

Stanford University communications professor Donald Roberts, who recently published a book about the impact that rap and heavy metal have on teen-agers,



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COCA COLA "STUDENT" OF THE MONTH

ELLIOTT REID

Senior,
West Charlotte High School




Elliott Reid's career objective is to become a criminal attorney, and he is laying the foundation to do so. He has worked with the local law firm of Grier & Grier, which heightened his desire to pursue his career as an attorney. He has also worked for Harris-Teeter Super Market and University Cinemas.

Throughout his school years, Elliott has been very active as a member of the National Beta Club, Senior Class President, Student Council, Youth Breaking Barriers, Youth Legislative Assembly, Order of the Lion, Love of Learning-Davidson College, Co-President West Charlotte DECA, DECA District II Vice President, NAACP, Discovery Place Volunteer, and Qwest West.

Other outstanding accomplishments include: Hugh O'Brien Ambassador, Minority Achievement President 9th grade, Sophomore Class Council, Kids Voting, Focus on Leadership-youth component, Straight-Up Writer for the Charlotte Observer, Junior Class Council and National Vocational Technical Honor Society.

Elliott has also been awarded for his deeds as Most Outstanding Teen Role Model, Most Outstanding Sophomore, Gibbs Award Recipient, Deca State Finalist & District Proficiency Winner, local and district winner of the Optimist Club Oratorical Contest.

Reading, community service, playing pool, writing and listening to music are hobbies that occupy his time while not at school.

Elliott is the son of Jimmy & Bernadette Reid. He has an older sister, Joy. The family attends Cedar Grove Presbyterian Church where he is a member of the Board of Trustees, church Sexton, member of the Youth Group and member of the Youth Usher Board.

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