

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Ruby Bridges tells story of 6-year-old girl among first to integrate New Orleans public schools in 1960



Ruby (Chaz Monét) walks to her new school with her mother, Lucielle (Lela Rochon) in "The Wonderful World of Disney's" Ruby Bridges, airing Sunday, Jan. 18 on ABC.

The dramatization of 6-year-old Ruby Bridges' heroic actions during the racially heated 1960s inspired a host of award-winning talent to come together for *Ruby Bridges*, a two-hour movie starring Lela Rochon, Penelope Ann Miller, Michael Beach, Kevin Pollak and newcomer Chaz Monét. Directed by Euzhan Palcy, *Ruby Bridges* will air as part of *The Wonderful World of Disney* on Sunday, Jan. 18, on ABC.

Shot entirely on location in Wilmington, N.C., *Ruby Bridges* is a poignant drama based on the true story of 6-year-old Ruby Nelle Bridges, one of the first African-American students to be integrated into the New Orleans public schools in 1960. The searing image of Ruby escorted to school under the protection of federal marshals inspired the unforgettable Norman Rockwell painting, *The Problem We All Live With*.

Sensual Lela Rochon, of *Waiting to Exhale* fame, por-

trays a different type of character in *Ruby Bridges*. As little Ruby's mother, Lucielle Bridges, Rochon tackled the part of a very religious, stern and courageous mother who believed that this opportunity to help make a change in the world was the right choice for her daughter.

"When I read the script, it touched me right away," says Rochon. "Without even finishing it, I said, 'Okay, this is my next job. I love this!'" Her reasons for stepping out of feature films for this telefilm were simple. "It's very rare that you find a project of this quality for television. It's something that I could really sink my teeth into and commit to."

Lucielle stood by her little girl as she marched into her classroom every day surrounded by four federal marshals and a jeering crowd of "Negro haters." "I think when you make moral decisions like this in your life," reflects Rochon, "you have to trust in your strength. Lucielle trusted in her faith in the Lord and I think that

had a lot to do with her courage and why she was so headstrong on Ruby doing this."

Film and television star Michael Beach (*Soul Food*, *Waiting to Exhale*, *ER*) brings another dimension to this story with his portrayal of Ruby's father, Abon, in the two-hour telefilm. Between his movies and his role on *ER*, Beach's schedule has not allowed him to do too many television movies. He decided to make an exception for *Ruby Bridges*.

"The script was so good, it just called out to me. The opportunity to play a character like this in a film like this is something that you really can't pass up."

Newcomer Chaz Monét makes her television debut in the title role. Rees remembers Chaz's auditions as "luminous." "She just came through with just the right qualities. When those qualities are

there, it never fails."

Rounding out the cast are Penelope Ann Miller (*Awakenings*, *Carlito's Way*) as Barbara Henry, the courageous and caring teacher from Boston who would become the friend young Ruby desperately needed, and Kevin Pollak (*A Few Good Men*) as Dr. Robert Coles, the psychiatrist who has dedicated his life to the study of social stress on impoverished children.

Award winning French film director Euzhan Palcy (*A Dry White Season*, *Sugar Cane Alley*) directed *Ruby Bridges* with a firm yet loving hand. "It was a great honor to direct this film," muses

Palcy, "because it's about life, it's about love, it's about faith, it's about dreams, hope, struggles, freedom and a challenge. I believe that this is not a story for Americans only ... it is a story for the world."



ACROSS the CREEK

First African American-owned theater chain opens in Chicago

CHICAGO — Alisa and Donzell Starks, owners of Inner City Entertainment Inc. (ICE), the first African-American-owned theatre chain in the country, have brought more than a touch of Hollywood to Chicago. The three \$40 million state-of-the-art multiplexes, financed by the husband and wife team, also brought over 400 jobs, family-oriented entertainment and, most importantly, hope for economic revitalization in Chicago's under-served communities.

The Inner City Entertainment/Cineplex Odeon Theatres premiered with a special grand opening screening of Steven Spielberg's film "Amistad." Directed by Spielberg and produced by Debbie Allen, "Amistad" is based on a true story about the saga of 55 African captives who were led in rebellion by Cinque (Djimon Hounsou) on board the Spanish slave ship. After breaking free and taking over the slave ship, the captives tried unsuccessfully to sail back to Africa before being captured, jailed and tried before the Supreme Court in this historic case, which tested the foundation of America's legal system.

Inner City Entertainment, along with their business partners, Toronto-based Cineplex Odeon Corporation, which will operate the Chicago multiplexes, were joined by Allen, actor Hounsou, producer/director Bill Duke, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and a host of friends to mark this historic occasion.

During a press conference, Daley praised the project for generating "much needed" economic growth in the city's rebuilding the Lawndale, Chicago Lawn and Chatham neighborhoods, as well as providing a job training program for area youth. He proclaimed the theaters' first official day of business as, "Let's go to the movies day in Chicago."

Just in time for the holiday season, the Inner City Entertainment Theatres officially opened their doors to the public showing a full slate of Hollywood blockbusters, including "Eve's Bayou," "Flubber," "Alien: Resurrection," "The Jackal," "Anastasis," "Mortal Combat: Annihilation," "Soul Food" and "Starship Trooper."

"Part of our goal is to own and operate over 100 screens by the year 2000," said Don Starks, president and CEO of ICE. "We have an excellent model here in Chicago and want to use ICE Theatres as a vehicle to revitalize communities elsewhere in the U.S. ICE will provide both entertainment and jobs for the community."

Starks, a former investment banker who developed the 34 screens in Chicago, plans to open three to four multiplexes in markets around the country each November. Projects are underway to develop ICE Theatres in Gary,



Pictured during the Inner City Entertainment-Cineplex Odeon Theatre grand opening are (left to right) actor/director Bill Duke; Donzell and Alisa Starks, owners of ICE Theatres; Amistad producer Debbie Allen; and actor Djimon Hounsou, ICE plans to open several state-of-the-art multiplexes in Baltimore, Md.; Charlotte, N.C.; Cleveland, Ohio; and Gary, Ind., in 1998, making it the first African-American-owned chain in the United States.

Ind.; Baltimore, Md.; Charlotte, N.C.; and Cleveland, Ohio. These four sites will be opened in 1998.

"Going to the movies is the No. 1 entertainment activity for African Americans," stated Alisa Starks, executive vice president of marketing and communications for ICE. "African Americans are not monolithic moviegoers. We want to see a variety of films, and it is important that we have ICE Theatres and access to films such

as "Amistad" and "Eve's Bayou" to share our history with all cultures."

Founded in 1993, Inner City Entertainment Inc. is dedicated to building state-of-the-art theaters and entertainment centers which exhibit first-run feature films in urban communities around the country, creating employment opportunities for minorities and providing family-oriented entertainment options.

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THE JACKAL (R)	1:30 3:30 5:30 7:30 9:30
ANASTASIA (G)	1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
FOR NICKER OR POONER (PG-13)	1:30 3:30 5:30 7:30 9:30
THE POSTMAN (THE) (R)	12:15 4:00 7:45
TOMORROW NEVER DIES (THE) (PG-13)	1:00 4:00 7:00 9:30
TOMORROW NEVER DIES (THE) (PG-13)	2:00 5:00 7:30 9:30
THE POSTMAN (THE) (R)	1:00 4:00 7:00
SCREAM 2 (R)	1:00 4:00 7:00 9:30
HOME ALONE 3 (PG)	12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
FLUBBER (DTS) (PG)	12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
AMISTAD (THE) (R)	1:00 4:30 8:00

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THE POSTMAN (THE) (R)	12:30 4:15 8:00
SCREAM 2 (R)	1:00 4:00 7:00 9:30
ANASTASIA (G)	1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:30
MR. MAGOO (PG)	1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:30
FOR NICKER OR POONER (PG-13)	1:30 4:15 7:00 9:30
FLUBBER (PG)	12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
SCREAM 2 (R)	1:00 4:15 7:15 9:30
AS GOOD AS IT GETS (PG-13)	1:30 4:15 7:00 9:30

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TITANIC (THE) (DTS) (PG-13)	12:00 4:00 8:00
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TOMORROW NEVER DIES (DTS) (PG-13)	1:00 4:00 7:00 9:30
AN AMERICAN WIFE (PG)	1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:30
MOUSEHUNT (PG)	1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:30
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