

LISA COLLINS

Behind the Scenes



Number One: In its first week out, "Waiting To Exhale" topped off at the nation's box office. The film, starring Whitney Houston, Angela Bassett, Lela Rochon and Loretta Devine, seems to have touched off a



Houston

nerve with women, particularly black women sparking the phenomenon of women organizing movie parties to attend the film in groups on opening weekend. Box office receipts have reportedly exceeded expectations set by 20th Century Fox execs (black men were not as inclined to agree).

With regards to the reported marital woes of film star Whitney Houston, things appeared to be fine as she was escorted by hubby, Bobby Brown to the star-studded Manhattan premiere, which also drew Angela Bassett, Lela Rochon, Loretta Devine, Jasmine Guy, Gregory Hines, Valerie Simpson and Nickolas Ashford, Phylicia and Ahmad Rashad, Leon, Penny Marshall and Tyra Banks...

On a related note, Bobby Brown was recently sentenced to two years probation upon entering a plea of no contest to kicking a hotel security guard. He was also ordered to pay more than \$1,000 in fines and penalties stemming from an August 1995 incident at a West Hollywood hotel when the security guard went to Brown's room to answer complaints of too much noise from the guest.

Onscreen: Much of Queen Latifah's holiday hiatus will be spent working on the forthcoming New Line Pictures. "Set It Off" and what a lineup producers have assembled. So far the cast includes Jada Pinkett, Vivica Fox, Blair Underwood and Ella Joyce.

Production is currently underway...Dorian Harewood turns in a hallmark performance as one of the villains in Jean



Washington

Claude Van Damme's latest thriller, "Sudden Death," but is even more impressive teamed with Chita Rivera on stage in a Los Angeles production of "Kiss Of The Spider Woman." While not known to most of his screen fans, Harewood also sings.

Passings: The holidays haven't been so kind to some blacks in Hollywood. First



Murphy

there was the passing of Rosalind Cash. Then there was Roxie Roker. And just last week there was the death of Madge Sinclair, whose presence dominated the stage and TV screen, earning five Emmy nominations (including Roots), and an Emmy for her co-starring role opposite James Earl Jones in "Gabriel's Fire."

Her last TV role was in last fall's ill-fated series, "Me & The Boys" She was the voice of the Lion Queen in the animated feature film box office hit, "The Lion King," but Sinclair is probably best remembered for her portrayal of Eddie Murphy's mom in "Coming To America." Services were held in L.A. and in Kingston, Jamaica, where she was

reared. The 57-year-old actress who was also an artist and collector had waged a 10 year battle against Leukemia.

On the money: What's the going fee for a megastar? Well, Denzel Washington's fee has risen to a whopping \$10 million per film. Fact is, he and other superstars are feared to be pricing themselves out of the marketplace. Universal recently signed a \$60 million pact with Sly Stallone for three movies. Twenty million



Goldberg

is the going rate for Jim Carrey, Tom Cruise, Harrison Ford and Mel Gibson. And while Whoopi Goldberg was paid a record \$8 million (to a female actress) for her role in "Sister Act II" a couple of years back, Sandra Bullock will pocket \$10.5 million for her next film. Studio execs. are crying superstar inflation.

By the way: Fred Williamson and his wife, Linda, were injured when he reportedly swerved his car to avoid some foxes while returning from a holiday outing. It took 13 stitches to close the cut over his left eye. His wife was also treated for minor injuries...Words spoken about Prince severing his deal with Warner Brothers were just a bit premature. He's only given them notice that he wants out. His deal with Warner Brothers Records is far from done as he still owes them three studio albums. Donna Summer won't let the fact that she's not presently signed to a record label stop her from recording another album. She's set to get started this month.

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