

LISA COLLINS

Behind The Scenes

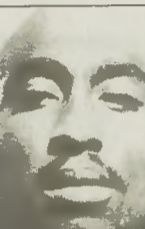


Top billing: Laurence Fishburne has landed the starring role in Paramount's "Even Horizon." He'll play the head of an exploration team that salvages a spaceship near Neptune after disappearing for seven years.



Fishburne

To do the picture, Fishburne passed on a key role in "The Rainmaker," which would have reunited him with director Francis Ford Coppola. Fishburne just finished work on "Hoods" with Tim Roth, Andy Garcia and Vanessa Williams. In that film, which is directed by Bill Duke, Fishburne portrays infamous Harlem numbers runner Bumpy Johnson.



Shakur

In other film news, Tupac Shakur's last film, "Gridlock," has now been set for release in late January. The film is described as an urban comedy that stars the late rapper as one of two addicts, who in the process of going straight, get turned around by a bureaucratic system that proves to be more of a hindrance than a help. The film is directed by actor Vondie Curtis-Hall.

And from Fox's executive suites comes word that producers George Jackson and Doug McHenry have signed a three-year, first-look deal for the development of projects for all of Fox's divisions. In addition, McHenry has signed a three-year directing deal at Fox. The team - famed for films like "New Jack City," "Jason's Lyric," and "A Thin Line Between Love & Hate" - reportedly has a higher than average domestic gross per picture. Their average domestic gross is \$22.5 million, while the industry averages \$12 million.

On the rise: A new study from the Screen Actors Guild finds minority performers have made steady gains in TV and film employment over the past five years. This is good news to an industry which had been bombarded with media to the contrary, particularly in light of the stink made by Rev. Jesse Jackson during this year's Academy Awards ceremonies. Most cite the gains as far from significant. The data

reveals that black actors nabbed 13 percent of the male acting roles last year, compared with 11 percent in 1991. African American actresses also captured 13 percent, up from 10 percent. The biggest contributors in the upswing are networks like Fox, the WB Network and UPN, who have put somewhat of an emphasis on reaching African American audiences. The most stagnant area of growth is employment for women 40 and over.

Star revelations: R&B diva Patti LaBelle has been jet-setting across the country on a promotion tour to support the recent release of her autobiography titled "Don't Block The Blessings: Revelations Of A Lifetime." And in case you didn't know it, Patti has her own fragrance out and it's available in fine department stores. For information on where you can get it, call (800) 903-5674.

Speaking of divas, Chaka Khan recently signed an exclusive record pact with Reprise Records. The first offing from the new deal will be her first ever collection of greatest hits titled "Epiphany: The Best of Chaka Khan Volume I." The project showcases classic hits like "Sweet Thing" and "Tell Me Something Good," along with five new tracks, including "Never Miss The Water" with

Me'Shell NdegeOcello. **By the way,** Vanessa Williams is slated to spread some holiday cheer this Christmas with the release of "Star Bright." Due Nov. 5, it features a guest vocal appearance by Bobby Caldwell...

Whoopi Goldberg will head back to Broadway for a four-month stint in the play "A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum" in February...The first single and video from RuPaul's Rhino Records debut, scheduled for release on Oct. 29, is appropriately titled "Snapshot."



GOLDBERG

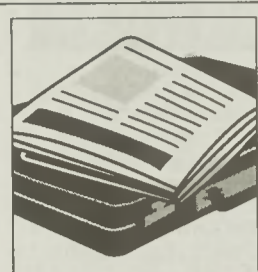
Actress Jada Pinkett teams with Tommy Davidson in the upcoming New Line feature "Woo," which shoots in Toronto and New York. Pam Grier and Isaac Hayes are part of the supporting cast.

Model-actress Tyra Banks has split from world-renown recording artist Seal, with whom she had been romantically linked...Diahann Carroll and hubby Vic Damone say busy schedules are partly to blame for their highly-publicized split...Finally, congratulations to Blair Underwood on



Williams

word that he and his wife are expecting their first baby.



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