

Will there be 'Barbershop' 3?

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"MGM, they didn't really know how to target the [intended] audience, so they just put it out like one of their other movies — which is good," Cube explained of the surprise success of the original Barbershop. "You know, I come from studios like New Line, who think they can target an audience and niche an audience. And really what they do is they hold back a lot of movies."

The film's crossover appeal, said Cube, "showed Hollywood that they're not so smart. Everybody wants to see a good movie no matter who it comes from."

Tapped to duplicate that success was a new director, Kevin Rodney Sullivan — who hadn't directed a film for the big screen since his promising 1998 debut *How Stella Got Her Groove Back*. But with most of Barbershop's onscreen veterans returning (Cube, Cedric, Eve, Sean Patrick Thomas, Troy Garity, Leonard Earl Howze and Michael Ealy are all back) plus an appearance by Queen Latifah (who is developing a spinoff, *Beauty Shop*), the transition to a new direction appears more seamless than it does with most sequels.

That may be because plot-wise, the *Back In Business* story isn't much different from its predecessor: Last time, an exorbitant tax bill nearly cost Calvin the hair cutters opened by his father four decades ago. Now, a corporate chain of Black barbershops known as Nappy Cutz moves in across the street. These events not only throw Calvin's shop into turmoil, but also embody a cold-blooded gentrification of their South Side Chicago neighborhood, threatening to result in longtime local businesses being shuttered, old ladies kicked out onto the street and in the eyes of some, a free ticket to a Florida retirement courtesy of a

snaky developer named Quentin Leroux (Harry Lennix).

Meanwhile, a strangely mellowed Terri (Eve) seems on track for a confrontation with a considerably de-thugged, secretive Ricky (Ealy); the conservative Jimmy (Thomas) has set out to work in local politics; and his nemesis, rising star barber Isaac (Garity) may also be ready to strike out on his own.

There are newcomers, too. Next door, Calvin's smart-alecky ex-girlfriend Gina (Latifah), whose customers and co-workers are as mouthy as Calvin's, works in a beauty shop. Now alongside Calvin is his cousin-in-law Kenard (Kenan Thompson), a recent barber school graduate who may be just a tad too ambitious for a beginner.

The most revealing plotline involves Eddie, who does double-time thanks to flashbacks to his beginnings

as a barber, and a glimpse into the sense of loss that pervades his otherwise mysterious private life.

Considering how many tales emerge from Hollywood about actors' on-set dissatisfaction with how their roles are written, the "Barbershop 2" cast seems more than pleased with the mood on the set and how their characters have developed from the first film.

"I love the transition from the first one, with Terri being so feisty," said Eve of how the film's writer, Don Scott, wrote her character for the sequel. "And this one showing just a little bit of, OK, maybe I am just a little too angry. [As far as the cast], it was like coming back to the same family."

With Eve holding down her own television show and clothing line, and Cedric's own Hollywood profile steadily rising, will there be room for a third Barbershop installment in its popular

cast's schedule? There are no current plans to film another sequel (when asked, Eve said it was "too early" to talk about it); but depending on how well this one performs at the box office, a full-scale plan could develop overnight. The film's star — who's been tapped to replace Vin Diesel in the big-budget sequel to the 2002 action hit "XXX" — seems at least receptive to the idea of returning for another. "I will always do movies like Barbershop, no matter how many 'XXX's or whatever come along," said Cube. "Because I just feel that, you know, these movies are talking to an audience that I grew out of. This is my audience, so I think those type of movies always have a place for me."

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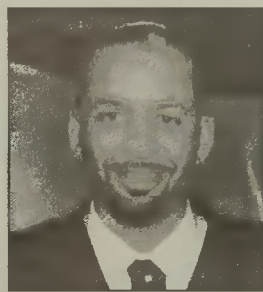
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