

ENTERTAINMENT

# Violence heavy, but 'In Too Deep' very satisfying

**Kam Williams**

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Omar Epps (*The Wood*, *The Mod Squad* and *Scream 2*) stars as a detective who infiltrates a Cincinnati drug ring so successfully that his colleagues worry that he may be 'in too deep'.

Reportedly based on the true story of a cop severely compromised by his total immersion into a world of unspeakable evil, the film also features Nia Long (*Love*

*Jones*) and Pam Grier (*Jackie Brown*). But it is rapper LL Cool J (the saving grace of the critically-reviled *Deep Blue Sea*) who really shines here, giving a breakthrough performance as God, not the deity, but as a crimelord nicknamed 'God' who controls most of the city's drug traffic.

*In Too Deep* should establish the multi-talented Mr. J as a top Hollywood draw. There aren't many

more challenges left for LL in the entertainment world. He burst onto the music scene in the early '80s with eight consecutive platinum albums.

In the interim, he has starred in tv series (*In the House* and *Oz*), in movies (*Halloween H20*), in commercials (Coca-Cola and The Gap), launched his own record label (Rock the Bells) and written his autobiography (*I Make My Own Rules*).

In a role which required that he exhibit a substantial range, LL is as convincing a ruthless hood as he is comfortable portraying the loyal, family man. In fact, God's gang leader persona was so scary, that I had no idea it was even LL Cool J onscreen for the first fifteen minutes or so. God is the type of person your mother taught you to cross the street to avoid.

Considerable credit must

be given to Australian director Michael Rymer (*Angel Baby*) for giving LL Cool J a long leash. And most of the rest of the cast, too, encouraged by Rymer to ad lib, delivered career performances.

Nia Long praised the director's giving them free rein. "He didn't know what black life was like and he didn't pretend to know," she said. "He was very open and encouraging."

The whole production looks terrifyingly realistic, especially for a movie about the ghetto which was filmed almost entirely in Toronto. As the opening credits roll, a profusion of profanity-laced rap erupts under a collage of unmistakably inner-city street scenes.

Told in a series of flashbacks, Detective Jeffrey Cole (Mr. Epps) a recent police academy graduate, (See Review, Page 20)

## Cool J embraced role as villain

**Gil Robertson**

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

In a career that spans nearly 20 years, Todd Smith, a.k.a. LL Cool J, has achieved a level of success attained by few of his peers in entertainment.

As a rapper, actor and author, LL has proven to be an all-around artist and multimedia performer of the first order.

Back with a new film (*In Too Deep*) currently in theatres and a new album slated for release this Fall, the Queens, N.Y. native is firmly positioned for a major crossover in his career.

Although best known as a rapper and star of the long-running TV show "In The House," LL has become a growing presence in cinema.

"Due to my status as a recording artist, I've been able to develop my acting career in stages that have been good for my overall career," he said. "With each new project I've taken on, my abilities as a performer have grown to a point where I am now comfortable with tackling bigger and meatier roles."

In his most recent role in Dimension Films' *In Too Deep*, LL tackles his most ambitious project to date, playing a notorious drug dealer known only as "God." It's a complex role that required the good-natured actor to delve into a side of his personality that he never knew he had.

"Oh man, this guy is mad, he's crazy. He's a straight out killer, who'll do anything to anybody who gets in his way. Playing him was a terrific experience because the role required me to reach inside of myself to places that I never knew existed. But that's what being an actor is all about - playing roles that are different from who you



**LL COOL J**

really are," he said. "I'm glad I had the experience."

Given the diverse mix of career options that have been available to LL, he's doing quite well. In fact, he's flourishing and says he looks forward to all of the challenges that lie ahead.

"I'm not complaining, I was looking for this," he says. "I welcome the wealth of opportunities coming my way and my main priority is to

take advantage of as many of them that I can. I want to further develop my skills in all areas of entertainment and be recognized for the gifts that I have."

The buzz is also hot for the Showtime series, "Linc." Starring Pam Grier, Steven Williams ("21 Jump Street," "The X-Files") and Georg Stanford Brown, the Tim Reid/Susan Fales produced comedy is earning high marks for excellence in TV land.

On Sept. 13th the Lifetime network will present "Where the Truth Lies" starring Regina King and Marlee Matlin. King plays a prominent defense attorney in this suspense thriller about a well-liked and upstanding citizen trying to prove her innocence when accused of murder. It's a must see.

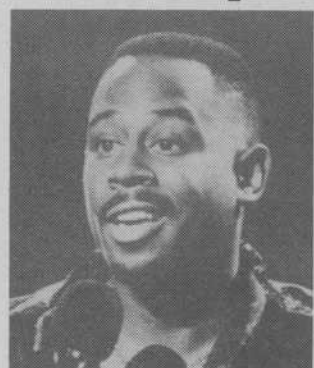
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## Actor Lawrence collapses during jog

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (AP)—Actor Martin Lawrence collapsed while jogging and lay in a coma for three days before regaining consciousness, hospital officials said Wednesday.

Lawrence, 34, who starred in TV's "Martin" and the movies *Life*, *Bad Boys* and *Nothing to Lose*, was listed in serious condition last week at Los Robles Regional Medical Center.

The cause of the collapse



**MARTIN LAWRENCE**

was not disclosed.

His girlfriend opened their front door after he had gone out for a jog and found him

keeled over the doorstep, moaning and having trouble breathing, said hospital spokeswoman Kris Carraway. Lawrence arrived at the hospital with a temperature of 107 degrees and had lapsed into a coma, Ms. Carraway said. He didn't regain consciousness until Tuesday, she added.

"He's suffering from kidney distress right now, but that's very typical in cases like this," Carraway said.

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