

# Best actor award elusive for blacks

LOS ANGELES (AP)— Michael Clarke Duncan may not have his Best Supporting Actor Oscar, but he hopes his recent Academy Award nomination gets him something else: leading-man status.

Duncan has uphill climb. Roles that get black performers into the Best Actor category have been scarce in an industry that has often relegated them to playing either villain or victim, critics say.

Even when black actors and actresses do get nominated, they have traditionally been overlooked. Sidney Poitier is the only black performer to claim the top acting Oscar, winning in 1964 for "Lilies of the Field."

"I don't think there are enough quality roles. And that's what we need to be doing," said Duncan, star of the supernatural prison saga, "The Green Mile."

While Hollywood has duly recognized work steeped in racial sensitivity, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences rarely rewards those performances beyond the supporting actor or actress categories.

No black woman has ever won in the Best Actress category, though some have been nominated. Most notable was Whoopi Goldberg for 1985's "The Color Purple," another example, critics say, of the Oscars recognizing, but not rewarding, a film about black suffering.

"The real issue is that black people are not part of the good old boy network of writers, directors and producers. If that changed, you'd see the role of black actors changing," said Thomas Rideout, the director of a National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) program in Los Angeles aimed at getting blacks started in the entertainment industry.

Denzel Washington was up for best actor this year for his tempestuous performance in "The Hurricane," playing middleweight boxer Rubin Carter, who spent 20 years in prison for a triple-slaying until a judge overturned the conviction.

Washington is one of the few A-list black actors whose status transcends his skin color, enabling him to attract in major productions leading man roles that are normally reserved for white actors—such as last year's thriller, "The Bone Collector." However, he normally gets attention at Oscar time for films involving black oppression. His only win was for a supporting role as a runaway slave-turned-union soldier in "Glory."

In addition, Washington snagged a Supporting Actor nomination for the South African civil rights drama, "Cry Freedom." A Best Actor nomination came for his portrayal of the slain black activist and title character in "Malcolm X."

In the heat of Oscar competition, the makers of "The Hurricane" tried to accentuate its entertainment value and soften its political implications. But its political nature was lost on few people.

Even Carter chose to politicize the movie while promoting it. On a tour of the nation's prisons, Carter showed the movie to inmates and championed its story about a flawed criminal justice system.

"To the producers, this is an entertaining tragedy that draws us to it. It has that right," he said recently. "But (See Blacks, Page 14)

## Jean cancels S.C. concert to support flag protest

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP)— Hip-hop artist Wyclef Jean canceled his performance here, his publicist said, to support the NAACP's boycott of South Carolina, which has been called to protest the state's flying of the Confederate flag.

Jean was supposed to perform at a concert sponsored by the College of Charleston last Friday, but he dropped out when found out about the booking.

Publicist Miguel Bager said the performer didn't "become aware of the show until (last) Thursday."

"When he realized it, he said, 'Oh my God, I can't do South Carolina because of the NAACP sanctions against it.' So that's what happened," Bager said.

The NAACP has urged travelers and entertainers to avoid South Carolina until the state removes the Confederate flag from its Statehouse dome.

The boycott began Jan. 1.

# Previews that make choosing a film fun

Kam Williams  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

**Black and White.** Searing, timely, cautionary tale about race in red-hot molten pot of hip-hop NYC. Cop (Ben Stiller) covers up the murder of young black man (Allan Houston). Eclectic casting includes Brooke Shields in dreadlocks and Mike Tyson as rapper. Supporting cast keeps it all in the family with Marla Maples (Trump's ex), Kidada Jones (Quincy's daughter), Scott Caan (James's son), Bijou Phillips (Papa John's daughter) and Robert Downey, Jr. (son of the director of Putney Swope).

**Joe Gould's Secret.** True story, beginning in 1940s, of a polite, spiritual panhandler who roamed the streets of Greenwich Village for 40 years. His secret? Squirreling condiment packets in his shorts to make himself one with everything.

**Luminarias.** First, unlucky, joyless Asian women joined The Joy Luck Club. This left CO2 retentive sisters Waiting to Exhale. Next, vengeful white divorcees formed The First Wives Club. Latina losers finally get their chance to get even. Drop the chalupa, and run, amigos.

**Me Myself I.** Run Lola Run/Sliding Doors-inspired

Outer Limits episode about a spinster who swaps places with her ideal self, happily married to Mungo Jerry in a parallel universe. I gotta be us.

**Ready to Rumble.** Scott Caan (see Black & White, above) and David Arquette as pro wrestling fans who tag team to help aging star, Oliver Platt. Directed by Brian Robbins (Good Burger), with cameos by WCW's Sting and Goldberg. Ready to run.

**Return to Me.** My heart will live on, literally. David Duchovny as a grieving widower who unknowingly falls for the grateful recipient (Minnie Driver) of his organ donor wife's heart. Set in a colorful, Chicago ethnic neighborhood. With Carroll O'Connor, Jim Belushi and David Alan Grier.

**Rules of Engagement.** Court-martialed for the murder of innocent civilians overseas, Samuel L. Jackson seeks aid of Viet Nam buddy-turned-lawyer Tommy Lee Jones. With Ben Kingsley, Blair Underwood and Anne Archer. Directed by William Friedkin (The Exorcist, French Connection, The Boys in the Band).

**Southpaw.** Yet another boxing flick. Documentary about Irish 1996 Olympian Francis Barrett's rise to glory. No pain, no movie deal.

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