

ENTERTAINMENT

# Back to the future: Baker ready for musical return

By Dianna Saffold  
Sentinel-Voice

The mood was set for the anticipated Anita Baker telephone interview.

On my left, I propped up her 1983 album "The Songstress" and to the right, "Rapture," the platinum, Grammy Award-winning album of 1986. On the cover of her debut album, "The Songstress," she peers directly into the camera as she is posed on a couch. She wasn't very fond of the picture on her debut album because her forehead was uncovered. A physical feature she described as huge.

Three years later though, forehead covered on the cover of "Rapture," she embraced herself with the confidence of self-discovery. Baker has not toured for almost a decade.

SENTINEL: Where are you right now? Let us see what you see.

ANITA: From my balcony I can see the city. The fog has moved in. The breeze is damp. Grosse Pointe, Mich., I like the midwestern lifestyle (here). I never sat down con-

sciously and said I'm going to stay, I just did.

SENTINEL: Since you've been gone for a while, any Anita Baker fan can almost recite your Internet bio. You were born in January 1958 in Toledo, Ohio, raised in Detroit, etc. We know you left the scene around the time of the release of your 1994 "Rhythm of Love." Now we want to know where have you been and what have you been doing?

ANITA: Life...my life and heart has changed. Everything in my life has changed. I had my sons in '93 and '94. Maternal feelings bring you home. Instead of recording in New York, I went to Nashville. That didn't work. I didn't belong. There was nothing left for me to do. My parents were ill. When I looked at all the factors, if you pay attention, it will force you to make a decision. God be praised that I didn't really have to work. The decision was made. It was time for family.

(Mama Lois Landry, who raised Baker, died in Decem-



ber 2002. Prior to Mama Landry's passing, her father died in 1998 and her birth mother in 1999.)

SENTINEL: Tell us about your spiritual beliefs?

ANITA: I was raised Baptist. It is where my respect of church comes. It is the origin of everything in me.

SENTINEL: Why do you wear Black so often?

ANITA: I always had a kinship to Black. When I was 12, I wore Black. I feel most creative in Black. I understand the power of Black. If you open my closet, you will find Black.

SENTINEL: Your bio says Sarah Vaughan, Nancy Wilson and Ella Fitzgerald influenced you, how so?

ANITA: This is the first time anyone wanted to know how they influenced me. As a child, I crawled around. We didn't have CD racks and album racks. The albums were placed against the wall. My first images were of them. Nancy Wilson was elegant. She was visual. She was very articulate in her presentation. Sarah Vaughan was a very low alto, going down as low as dark, thick molasses. I had this thick, heavy voice. Once

I heard Sarah, (I borrowed from) the fluidness from which she would go from one note to another. Ella is like an instrument. She goes to the heavens, trumpet-like, in her journey. From Ella, I got a "freedom."

SENTINEL: What about Elektra, the contract problems and how those problems moved you to Atlantic?

ANITA: My life is an open book. I broke my contract and went to court. I didn't want to leave. The record company didn't want to pay. I am not with Atlantic. I have signed with a wonderful record company, but I cannot reveal the name yet. It will be announced soon.

The universe is made up of cells, protons, neurons and molecules. Each of us gives off energy. You can connect with people. Everything we say, do, touch, we create what we want.

SENTINEL: For your fans that have waited for your return, what have you to say to them?

ANITA: I first want to say thank you for giving. It's a

very fickle business. For all purposes, I should have come and gone by now. I'm very grateful that my audience is so loyal. I'm very fortunate to have such a loyal audience. I'm not going to sell you out. I've been in situations where people have tried to change my style, saying, "You know you need to do this or you need to do that." The one thing I can say to my folks is that my music is my music. The product will be me. As long as there is a company that is willing to allow me to do what I do, then I'll keep making records and I'll enjoy making those records.

Thank you for letting me sing jazz when I want to sing jazz, letting me sing rhythm and blues, and letting me mix them all up together when I want to. That is really special! Anita Baker, filled with a positive universal energy, will share that power with Las Vegas in the MGM Grand Garden Arena on Dec. 30. Tickets are \$50, \$85, and \$150. For tickets, call (702) 891-7777.

# 2003 offered best, worst, mediocre of black acting, film

By Kam Williams  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Judging by the recently announced Golden Globe nominations, you'd think that no African-Americans had achieved anything worthy of merit in Hollywood this year.

For none of the 31 actors and actresses nominated for performances in feature films is black, unless you count Jack Black (School of Rock) because of his name, or Charlize Theron (Monster) because she's originally from South Africa.

Other than Ken Watanabe (The Last Samurai), only white people were nominated in any movie category, including Best Director, Best Screenplay, Best Original Score and Best Song.

This sad state of the cinematic union reflects badly on the meaning of the recent Oscar triumphs of Halle and Denzel.

For many took their success as an indication that the playing field might have finally been leveled.

The universal euphoria in the wake of those wins was evidence of an expectation that they would usher in a new era of colorblind casting and the allocation of annual

accolades based on merit, not melanin.

But since we're back to a basic blackout, I say there's still a need for a separate acknowledgement of the work of African-Americans in the movie industry, for better or worse.

Otherwise, as Ralph Ellison suggested in the book "Invisible Man" over a half century ago, African-Americans might remain marginalized as invisible participants in American society, even in the country's most high-profile business.



TUPAC  
10 Best Black Films

- 1) Tupac: Resurrection
- 2) Out of Time
- 3) Tears of the Sun
- 4) Scary Movie 3
- 5) Bad Boys II
- 6) A Man Apart
- 7) Bringin Down the House

- 8) DysFunktional Family
- 9) Raykwan's Cuties
- 10) Biker Boyz



WILL SMITH  
Best Actors

- Will Smith (Bad Boys II)  
Martin Lawrence (Bad Boys II)  
Chiwetel Ejiofor (Dirty Pretty Things)  
Denzel Washington (Out of Time)  
Laurence Fishburne (Mystic River)  
Derek Luke (Pieces of April)  
Harold Perrineau, Jr. (On-Line)

- Best Actresses  
Gabrielle Union (Bad Boys II)  
Sanaa Lathan (Out of Time)  
Queen Latifah (Bringing Down the House)  
Regina Hall (Scary Movie 3)  
Michael Michele (Dark Blue)  
Lillias White (Pieces of April)  
Eva Mendes (Out of Time)



ANTOINE FUQUA  
Best Directors

- Antoine Fuqua (Tears of the Sun)  
Carl Franklin (Out of Time)  
F. Gary Gray (The Italian Job)  
Tim Greene (Raykwan's Cuties)  
Reggie Rock Bythewood (Biker Boyz)



GABRIELLE UNION  
10 Worst Black Movies

- 1) Boat Trip
- 2) Radio

- 3) From Justin to Kelly
- 4) The Fighting Temptations
- 5) Marci X
- 6) The Haunted Mansion
- 7) Deliver Us from Eva
- 8) Head of State
- 9) Gothika

- 10) Malibooty
- Worst Actor  
Cuba Gooding, Jr. (Boat Trip, The Fighting Temptations and Radio)  
Worst Actress  
J-Lo (Gigli)

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